

## **Flu vaccination for children**

### **Answers to some commonly asked questions**

**Why do children need a flu vaccine?** People of any age can get flu, but children have the highest rate of infection and flu can be serious for them. Flu is caused by viruses and spreads easily. It can cause fever, aching muscles, headaches, tiredness, a blocked nose, cough and sore throat, lasting up to a week. Children who get flu often feel very unwell, and for some it can cause serious illness. Complications can include bronchitis, pneumonia and ear infections. Some children get so ill they need to be admitted to hospital.

Flu vaccine helps protect children from flu and also helps stop the virus spreading to family and friends. Protection starts around two weeks after having the vaccine. Some people get flu even after having the vaccine, but this is then often a milder illness. Flu vaccines do not protect against colds or other winter illnesses.

**Will the flu vaccine cause flu?** No, the flu vaccine will not cause flu.

**How is the flu vaccine given?** For most children the flu vaccine is a nasal spray. This is given as a fine mist up the nose and gives children better protection than a flu vaccine injection.

**Are there any side effects from a flu vaccine?** Flu vaccines are very safe. The nasal spray may cause a runny or blocked nose. Some children get a slight temperature, feel tired, have a headache, a reduced appetite or aching muscles for a day or two after having a flu vaccine. The flu injection can cause a sore arm.

**If my child has a cough, cold or other minor illness should I delay their flu vaccination?** No, do not delay a flu vaccination because of a minor illness.

**Are there any children who shouldn't have the nasal spray vaccine?** Most children can have the nasal spray vaccine. We do not recommend it for the very small number of children who:

- have had a serious allergic reaction to the vaccine or any part of it;
- are on long-term aspirin (salicylate) treatment;
- have needed intensive care following a severe allergic reaction to eggs or egg products;
- have had oral steroids in the past 14 days;
- have a wheezy chest on the day of the vaccination or in the previous three days;
- have increased the use of their asthma inhaler in the last three days;
- have a condition or treatment that weakens their immune system; or
- are in close contact with someone who has a very weakened immune system and needs to be isolated (for example, after a bone marrow transplant).

If a child cannot have the nasal spray because of one of these reasons, they will be offered a flu vaccine injection instead.

**Does the nasal spray vaccine contain gelatine?** Yes, the nasal spray vaccine contains traces of highly purified gelatine (porcine gelatine) which is also used in a range of essential medicines. For a full list of the vaccine ingredients, visit this website: [www.medicines.org.uk/emc/](http://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/) and enter 'Fluenz Tetra' into the search box. The flu injection is available as an alternative for children who are at high risk from flu due to one or more health conditions or treatments.

**How often does my child need a flu vaccine?** They will need the vaccine every year to get the best protection. Flu viruses can change each year, so the vaccine is changed to match them.

**Where can I get more information or download a leaflet?** Visit [www.beatflu.org](http://www.beatflu.org)