

FLU ARTICLE TO INCLUDE IN SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

Flu season: protect your child against flu

The Essex Partnership University Trust Immunisation team will be attending schools within Essex during the autumn and winter terms to administer the annual flu vaccinations to schoolchildren from reception to year 11.

Flu can be a serious and unpleasant virus, it can spread rapidly. Symptoms for children and adults include the chills, headache, fever, aching muscles, sore throat and a dry cough. Unfortunately, some children can develop complications from the flu such as pneumonia or bronchitis that may need hospital treatment.

For those children vulnerable because of long-term medical conditions such as diabetes, asthma, heart or lung disease getting flu can be incredibly serious as they are at risk of developing serious complications.

Delivering the vaccination programme through schools is the best way to ensure the maximum number of children are protected against flu. Vaccination will also help reduce the spread of flu and protect the whole population, including those who cannot or do not have the vaccine. With the country still in recovery from the coronavirus pandemic and the flu season rapidly approaching, it will also help to reduce pressure on the NHS and other vital services.

Watch the video about the flu nasal spray here:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFXJmSIEb5c

A consent form will be sent to all parents/carers. Please return your consent forms to school if a paper consent form or by completing an online form using the shared link as soon as possible.

Further information about flu and the flu vaccine for both children and adults can be found on www.nhs.uk/conditions/flu/

If you have any queries, please contact The Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust School Immunisation team on 0300 790 0597 option 1.

#DoyourbitEssex

FLU VACCINE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When and where will my child receive the flu vaccine?

Children in primary school will receive their vaccine in the school setting in either the autumn and winter term. Community clinics are also held outside of school hours for those children not in the school setting or who are absent on the day of vaccination.

School visits are planned in advance of flu season, on the rare occasion this date changes, the EPUT Immunisation team will communicate with parents via the school.

Why are healthy children being offered flu vaccine?

Flu can be a serious and unpleasant virus, it can spread rapidly. Symptoms for children and adults include the chills, headache, fever, aching muscles, sore throat and a dry cough. Unfortunately, some children can develop complications from the flu such as pneumonia or bronchitis that may need hospital treatment.

For those children vulnerable because of long-term medical conditions such as diabetes, asthma, heart or lung disease getting flu can be incredibly serious as they are at risk of developing serious complications. If children are vaccinated against flu they will not only benefit directly by being protected themselves, they will also reduce the spread of flu and help protect the whole population. In particular, they will help to protect those children and adults who cannot or do not have the vaccine.

Does my child have to have the flu vaccine?

No. As with all immunisations, flu vaccines for children are optional. However, this vaccine will help protect them from what can be an unpleasant illness, as well as stopping them spreading flu to vulnerable friends and relatives.

What vaccine will my child receive?

Most children will be offered the Fluenz nasal spray. This is a single spray squirted up each nostril. It is needle free, quick and painless.

Does the nasal flu vaccine contain pork?

Yes, the vaccine contains a highly processed form of gelatine that is derived from pigs – porcine gelatine. This gelatine helps to keep the vaccine viruses stable to ensure it provides the best protection against flu.

Why is porcine gelatine used in nasal spray vaccines?

Gelatine is used in a very wide range of medicines, including many capsules and some vaccines. Porcine gelatine is used in vaccines as a stabiliser – to ensure that the vaccine remains safe and effective during storage. Vaccine manufacturers normally test a wide range of stabilisers and choose one that is stable, good quality and available in sufficient volume. Unlike the gelatine used in foods, the product used in vaccines is highly purified and broken down into very small molecules called peptides.

Are there any suitable alternatives to this vaccine?

There are injectable flu vaccines that do not contain porcine gelatine. These are generally expected to be less effective than Fluenz Tetra® in children. They may also do less to reduce the spread of flu in the community. These vaccines are currently only recommended as part of the programme for children and adults who are at high risk of the complications of flu or unable to have the nasal due to the gelatine content.

Can my child have the injected flu vaccine instead of the nasal spray?

The nasal flu vaccine is more effective than the injected vaccine for children aged two and over and is therefore the preferred option. However if your child is unable to have the nasal spray due to the pork gelatine content the flu vaccine can also be administered in the form of an injection. Please call the EPUT Immunisation team if you would like the injection, as this requires a different consent form.

Will the flu vaccine give my child flu?

No. The vaccine contains viruses that have been weakened to prevent them from causing flu.

How does the vaccine work?

The vaccine contains live but weakened flu viruses that do not cause flu in children. It will help your child build up immunity to flu in a similar way as natural infection, but without symptoms. Because the main flu viruses change each year, a new nasal spray vaccine has to be given each year.

Why is the Fluenz nasal spray vaccine being used?

The flu virus enters the body through the nose and mouth. From there it is transmitted to the throat and upper airways where it rapidly replicates and goes on to cause the symptoms of flu. Because Fluenz also enters the body through the nose it mimics the flu virus and results in a better immune response than an injected vaccine. This means that, compared with injected and less active vaccines, Fluenz:

- Is more effective
- Provides protection for longer
- May offer protection against slightly different types of flu virus
- Is easier to give and more comfortable to have

Will my child suffer any side effects?

The flu vaccine has very few side effects, these include:

- Headache
- Runny or blocked nose
- Raised temperature
- Decreased appetite

These are common, but pass quickly and can be treated with paracetamol or ibuprofen if you feel your child needs it.

Where can I find out more information on the flu vaccine?

For more information on the flu vaccine for children click the following links:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/child-flu-vaccine