Health Protection
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Dear Parents,

If you have a child aged 2 or 3 years old you should receive a letter in September or October from your GP inviting your child for a free nasal influenza vaccination. We would encourage you to ensure your child receives this protective vaccine; this will help to prevent the spread of influenza in children and also in friends and relatives who may be at risk of complications from influenza. It will also prevent time spent away from work looking after a sick child, if applicable.

The nasal spray influenza vaccine is also available for all school aged children and offered routinely to all children in school. The vaccine is given as a single dose of nasal spray squirted up each nostril. **This is not a needle** (a big advantage for children), the nasal spray works even better than the injected influenza vaccine. The vaccine is very safe with few side effects and has been used for a number of years in the UK.

It's quick and painless and will mean your child is less likely to become ill, resulting in less time away from school, if they come into contact with the influenza virus. Its brand name is Fluenz.

Children are good at spreading influenza, because they tend to sneeze everywhere and don't use tissues properly or wash their hands. Vaccinating them may also protect others that are vulnerable to influenza such as babies, older people, pregnant women and people with serious long-term illnesses. A common complication of influenza can be bronchitis; occasionally this can become serious and develop into pneumonia and even cause death.

Questions and answers are on the back of this letter that will hopefully answer any queries you may have. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact your GP, school nurse or Health Visitor.

If anyone you know falls into the at-risk groups encourage them to have the influenza vaccine to prevent them becoming ill.

Yours faithfully

Gillian McLauchlan
Deputy Director of Public Health

What is Influenza (flu)?
Flu is caused by a virus and cannot be treated with antibiotics. The most common symptoms of flu are fever, chills, headache, aches and pains in the joints and muscles, and extreme tiredness. Healthy individuals usually recover within 2 to 7 days but for some the disease can lead to hospitalisation, permanent disability or even death.

Can I avoid flu?
The best way to avoid catching and spreading flu is by having the vaccination before the flu season starts!

If I get flu how do I reduce the risk of spreading it to someone else?
To prevent spread: cover the mouth and nose with a tissue when you sneeze or cough, dispose of the tissues and then wash your hands. "Catch it, Bin it, Kill it."

Who should have the flu vaccination?
Even if you feel healthy you should have the free flu vaccination if you are:
From 1 September 2024:

- **pregnant women**
- **all children aged 2 or 3 years on 31 August 2024**
- **primary school aged children (from Reception to Year 6)**
- **secondary school aged children (from Year 7 to Year 11)**
- **all children in clinical risk groups aged from 6 months to less than 18 years**

From October 2024, exact start date to be confirmed by NHS England in due course:

- **those aged 65 years and over**
- **those aged 18 years to under 65 years in clinical risk groups (as defined by the Green Book, Influenza Chapter 19)**
- **those in long-stay residential care homes**
- **carers in receipt of carer's allowance, or those who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person**
- **close contacts of immunocompromised individuals**
- **frontline workers in a social care setting without an employer led occupational health scheme**

How do I get the flu vaccine?
The vaccines should be given during October or early November. If you fit the above criteria speak to your GP or Practice Nurse to book a vaccination appointment and get the best possible protection.

How effective is the flu vaccine?
The annual flu vaccination will protect you against flu this coming winter. No vaccine is 100% effective; however, people who have had the flu vaccine are less likely to get flu. If you do get flu despite having the vaccine, it will probably be milder than if you haven't been vaccinated.

Flu vaccines side effects – what are they?
The flu vaccine does not cause flu. However, you may experience some mild side effects after having the vaccine, such as a slight temperature and cold-like symptoms for a couple of days afterwards. The flu vaccine only protects against flu, but not other illnesses caused by other viruses such as the common cold.

Can the flu vaccine be given to my child at the same time as other vaccines?
Yes. The flu vaccine can be given at the same time as all routine childhood vaccines. The vaccination can go ahead if your child has a minor illness such as a cold but may be delayed if your child has an illness that causes a fever.