

# Help Protect Your School from Flu this winter

## The Nasal Flu Vaccine

The Nasal Flu Vaccine was first offered in 2013 (initially to pre-school children aged 2, 3 and 4) via letter invite to parents/guardians from their doctor, with the vaccine being administered at the child's GP surgery. As you will be well aware, since then the Department of Health have rolled the programme out to further primary school year groups each year to the current position whereby every primary school child is offered a flu immunisation every year. This year the programme has been expanded for all school children up to year 11.

The flu vaccine for children is given as a single dose of nasal spray squirted up each nostril. Not only is it needle-free (a big advantage for children), the nasal spray works even better than the injected flu vaccine with fewer side effects and has an excellent safety record both here in the UK and in the USA. It's quick and painless and will mean your child is less likely to become ill if they come into contact with the flu virus. Its brand name is Fluenz Tetra.

Children are good at spreading flu, 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 flu such as babies, older people, pregnant women and people with serious long-term illnesses.

IntraHealth are the service provider in Greater Manchester and are very experienced in not just giving the vaccination but also ensuring the programme in schools runs smoothly with as little disruption as possible ([www.intrahealth.co.uk](http://www.intrahealth.co.uk)).

Unfortunately, the uptake of the nasal vaccine across Salford is still lower than the GM and UK average, putting both our children and the wider community at a higher risk of flu.

## Reasons for Children to Have the Nasal Flu Vaccine

There are many reasons for parents to consent to their child having the nasal flu vaccine at school.

In brief, the main key messages to communicate to parents are as follows: -

- Protect your child.
- Protect you, your family and friends. Vaccinating your child will help protect more vulnerable family and friends.
- No injection needed – the nasal spray is painless and easy to have.
- It's better than having flu. The nasal spray helps protect against flu, has been given to millions of children worldwide and has an excellent safety record. Flu can cause serious complications to health.
- Avoid costs. If your child gets flu, you may have to take time off work or arrange alternative childcare.

## Myths and Misconceptions about the Nasal Flu Vaccine

*There is no point my child having the nasal flu spray as I heard the flu vaccine didn't work last year* - Each year the strain match is highly effective; however, on the rare occasions the strain may change slightly, the vaccine will still be highly effective in minimising the severity of the flu virus if this ever occurs.

*Having the nasal flu spray will give my child flu* - No, it won't. The nasal vaccine does not contain flu viruses that can replicate, so it can't give them flu. Some children might get a slight temperature and aching muscles for a couple of days afterwards, but this shouldn't be mistaken for flu. Other reactions are very rare.

*Having the flu is not serious, it's just like having a 'cold'* – No it isn't. Flu can result in serious health problems, such as pneumonia or other serious bacterial infections, which could result in hospitalisation. In extreme cases, it may even cause death. There is a much-increased risk of this if a child is in one of the 'at risk' groups, for example if they have particular long term health conditions.

*Flu can be treated with antibiotics* - No, it can't. Viruses cause flu, and antibiotics only work against bacteria. A bacterial infection may occur as a result of having the flu, in which case antibiotics may be given later, but this could be when more serious health problems have occurred.

*My child has already had the vaccine previously, so they're protected for life* - No, they're not. The viruses that cause flu can change every year, so you need a vaccination each year that matches the new viruses. The vaccine usually provides protection for the duration of the flu season that year.

## What Else Can You Do to Help Protect Your School Community from Flu?

As well as your school staff talking to parents, you as a school can also reinforce the key messages to encourage parents to consent to their child having the nasal flu vaccine, easily and effectively by doing the following:-

- Putting an article in your newsletter to parents
- Sending text messages to parents
- Emailing parents
- Posting key messages or a PDF of the '5 reasons to vaccinate your child' poster on your school Facebook and Twitter:-
- [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1027654/UKHSA-12053-flu-5-reasons\\_poster-primary.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1027654/UKHSA-12053-flu-5-reasons_poster-primary.pdf)
- Sending the key messages via your Home – School communication apps

You as a school can also order: 'Protecting your child against flu' leaflets to distribute to parents as well as the '5 reasons to vaccinate your child' posters to display. Both the leaflets and the posters can be sourced completely free of charge via this link:-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-vaccination-leaflets-and-posters> or by ringing the DoH Orderline (0300 123 1002). Other resources are available at:  
<https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources/search>

Thank you for all your support with the flu vaccination programme.

Salford City Council

# Flu FAQs

## What is 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:-

- Aged 65 years or over
- Aged 6 month to 65 years if you have an underlying health condition – speak to your doctor
- Living in a residential or nursing home
- The main carer of an older or disabled person
- A household contact of an immuno-compromised person
- A health or social care worker (speak to your employer)
- Pregnant
- Aged 2 and 3 (from the GP)
- Primary school children (from the school based programme)
- Secondary children (school based programme)

## 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 temperature and aching muscles for a couple of days afterwards. Your arm may feel sore at the site where you were injected. More severe reactions are rare. 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 children 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.