

A parent's guide to the **seasonal flu vaccination**



**“Is your
child at
risk from
flu?”**

Important
information for
parents with
children under
the age of 16.

www.nhs.uk/flu

NHS

Does my child need the seasonal flu vaccine?

Your child needs the vaccine if they have a long-term health condition. These include:

- Serious lung or breathing problems, such as severe asthma, needing regular inhaled or oral steroids
- Serious heart conditions
- Kidney or liver disease
- Diabetes
- A low immune system due to disease or treatment. For example, chemotherapy or radiotherapy treatment for cancer or long-term steroid use
- Problems with the spleen, either because the spleen has been removed or doesn't work properly. For example, sickle cell disease.

Your GP may also recommend your child has the vaccine if they have a condition that affects the nervous system, such as cerebral palsy or a neurological disability.



“ **Flu can harm your child. Get them protected...** ”

Why is the vaccine so important?

Flu is a highly infectious disease and is far more serious than a cold. Symptoms hit suddenly and severely and usually include fever, chills, headaches and aching muscles, as well as vomiting and crying in children. A vaccine is available every year to protect people who are most at risk - including children - from catching or spreading flu.

What does the vaccine protect against?

The vaccine will protect against flu viruses, including the H1N1 strain which caused the swine flu pandemic in 2009 and which continues to circulate.



Why do some children need the flu vaccine?

Children with long-term health conditions are not able to fight off flu as well as other children and are particularly at risk from the H1N1 strain which will be circulating again this winter. Flu can make your child's existing condition worse and can result in more serious complications which require hospital treatment - sometimes with devastating consequences. This can be prevented by having the vaccine.

Is the vaccine safe for children?

YES - the current manufacturing process for the flu vaccine has been used since the 1980s and is tried and tested. Although a new vaccine is produced each year (to cover the new virus strains which change every year), the process of manufacture is the same and is safe.



“ Does your child have a health condition?

Catching flu is the last thing they need... ”

Is the vaccine available to all children?

NO - the vaccine is only available to children aged over six months with long-term health conditions (see list on page 2). If your child is younger than six months, please speak to your GP.

How does the vaccine work?

The vaccine works by tricking your child's immune system into thinking it has been infected with the flu virus, so that it creates antibodies against it. About a week to ten days after having the flu vaccine, your child's body will start making antibodies to fight off what it thinks is a virus in the vaccine. Then, if subsequently exposed to the virus, your child's immune system will destroy the virus before it can cause any serious illness.

The vaccine **CANNOT** give you the flu.



Are there any side effects?

Most people suffer nothing worse than a slightly sore arm. More severe reactions are very rare.

Is there anyone who shouldn't have the vaccine?

If your child has had a serious allergy to the vaccine in the past or has a serious allergy to hens' eggs they may not be able to have the vaccine. This type of allergy is extremely rare. Please make sure you discuss this with your GP beforehand.

Will the vaccine protect my child completely?

Most children who have the vaccine will not get flu. However, like any vaccine, it does not give 100% protection. The majority of people will be fully protected; some will get milder flu symptoms but a small number may still get flu.



When should my child have the vaccine?

As soon as possible - the vaccine will be available free of charge from October 2012 and will protect your child throughout this year's flu season.

Where can I get my child vaccinated?

The vaccine is available from your local GP. Please don't be complacent or wait until there is a flu outbreak this winter - book an appointment for your child as soon as possible.



“ You’d do everything you can to protect your child...”

Get the jab – Get flu safe

Getting a flu jab is quick, safe and free. If your child is at risk of complications from flu, it can protect them all winter. Don't delay – make sure your child gets protected from seasonal flu, including the H1N1 virus.

To book your jab,
contact your
GP today.



Text from NHS North East 'Seasonal Flu – is your child at risk?' 2012.