

SHOULD MY CHILD TAKE FLUENZ?

Influenza (or flu) is a common and highly infectious disease caused by different strains of the Influenza virus. Each year a new vaccine is introduced to protect against the commonest strain of flu, saving thousands of lives.

Research from Public Health England tells us that in children ages 2-17 years the flu vaccine prevented:

- 49% of flu cases in 2018-19
- 45% of flu cases in 2019-20

VACCINATION IS THE BEST DEFENCE WE HAVE AGAINST A VIRUS WHICH CAUSES SEVERE ILLNESS AND DEATHS EVERY YEAR.

THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF VACCINES IN THE UK THAT PROTECT AGAINST FLU:

1. A NASAL SPRAY (CALLED FLUENZ TETRA):

This is a live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV) offered to all children aged 2-11 years. Fluenz Nasal Spray vaccine protects against four flu virus strains and contains porcine (pork) gelatine.

2. INJECTED VACCINES:

These are several versions of inactivated influenza vaccines (IIV). These protect between three-four of the flu strains which are most likely to be around. Adults and some younger age groups are given these vaccines. These contain no porcine derived products.

Several studies have shown that LAIV (nasal spray) may actually work better than an IIV (injection). It is thought to offer longer and better protection against mismatched strains, such as when the flu vaccine doesn't exactly cover the flu virus strains that are going around that year.



As children with long-term health conditions (such as diabetes and heart problems) are at higher risk from getting very sick with flu, your doctor may recommend that they get the LAIV (Fluenz spray), since it offers better protection.

For the 2020/21 flu season, children whose parents refuse Fluenz nasal spray due to the porcine gelatine content may be offered the injectable inactivated flu vaccine as an alternative to Fluenz where stocks allow. This could be delayed due to vaccine shortages and is scheduled for November, subject to availability. The children who are in high risk categories will be prioritised over those objecting to Fluenz on religious grounds.



You should speak to a trusted religious scholar about taking Fluenz if you have concerns about its porcine gelatine content. Please do not delay this decision as it is important to protect the health of your child if they are in the high risk category.

