



**Dear Parent/Guardian,**

Your child is due to receive a nasal flu vaccination offering protection against winter flu. Flu can be a very unpleasant illness in children causing fever, stuffy nose, dry cough, sore throat, aching muscles and joints, and extreme tiredness. Some children can get a very high fever, sometimes you may need to go to hospital for treatment. Serious complications of flu include a painful ear infection, acute bronchitis, and pneumonia.

This will be given in school from October please ask the school for the exact date. It is a simple spray up each nostril - quick and painless.

### **Why should my child have the flu vaccine?**

#### **What are the benefits of the vaccine?**

It will help protect your child from what can be a very nasty illness. It will reduce the chance of others in your family, who could be at greater risk from flu, such as grandparents or those with long term health conditions, getting flu from your child. This year, helping to protect them against flu is particularly important if COVID-19 is still circulating because people at risk from flu are also vulnerable to the complications of COVID-19.

#### **How effective is the vaccine?**

Flu vaccine is the best protection we have against this unpredictable virus. The effectiveness of the vaccine will vary from year to year, depending on the match between the strain of flu in circulation and that contained in the vaccine. In the UK the vaccine offered to children has usually provided good protection against flu since its introduction.

#### **Why are so many children being offered the vaccine?**

As well as helping to protect children who are vaccinated, the infection is then less able to spread, and so it helps to protect other family members and friends.

#### **My child had the flu vaccination last year. Do they need another one this year?**

Yes; flu viruses change every year so the vaccine may be updated. For this reason, we recommend that your child is vaccinated against flu again this year, even if vaccinated last year.

#### **Can the vaccine cause flu?**

No, the vaccine cannot cause flu because the viruses in it have been weakened to prevent this from happening.

#### **So how does the nasal spray work?**

The nasal spray contains viruses that have been weakened to prevent them from causing flu but will help your child to build up immunity. When your child comes into contact with these flu viruses, it helps the immune system to fight off the infection. The vaccine is absorbed quickly in the nose so, even if your child sneezes immediately after having had the spray, there's no need to worry that it hasn't worked.

### Are there any side-effects of the vaccine?

Children may develop a runny or blocked nose, headache, general tiredness and some loss of appetite. However, these are much less serious than developing flu or complications associated with flu. Serious side-effects are uncommon.

### What about my child who has a health condition?

Children with certain health conditions, even if well managed, are at higher risk of severe complications if they get flu. It is especially important that these children are vaccinated.

### Are there any children who shouldn't have the nasal vaccine?

As children with pre-existing medical conditions may be more vulnerable to complications of flu it is especially important that they are vaccinated. Children may not be able to have the nasal vaccine if they: are currently wheezy or have been wheezy in the past 72 hours (they should be offered a suitable injected flu vaccine to avoid a delay in protection), have needed intensive care due to asthma or egg allergic anaphylaxis (Children in these two groups are recommended to seek the advice of their specialist and may need to have the nasal vaccine in hospital), have a condition, or are on treatment, that severely weakens their immune system or have someone in their household who needs isolation because they are severely immunosuppressed, are allergic to any other components of the vaccine - See the website at [www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/3296/pil](http://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/3296/pil) for a list of the ingredients of the vaccine. If your child is at high risk from flu due to one or more medical conditions or treatments and can't have the nasal flu vaccine they should have the injected flu vaccine. If you are unsure whether your child should get the injected vaccine or the nasal vaccine please check with the school immunisation team or the nurse or GP at your surgery. Children who have been vaccinated with the nasal spray should avoid household contact with people with very severely weakened immune systems for around two weeks following vaccination.

### 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 the other routine childhood vaccines. The vaccination may be delayed if your child has a fever. Also, if a child has a heavily blocked or runny nose, it might stop the vaccine getting into their system. In this case, their flu vaccination can be postponed until their nasal symptoms have cleared up.

### Does the nasal vaccine contain gelatine derived from pigs (porcine gelatine)?

Yes. The nasal vaccine contains a highly processed form of gelatine (porcine gelatine), which is used in a range of many essential medicines. The gelatine helps to keep the vaccine viruses stable so that the vaccine provides the best protection against flu. The nasal vaccine is offered to children as it is more effective in the programme than the injected vaccine. This is because it is easier to administer and considered better at reducing the spread of flu to others, who may be more vulnerable to the complications of flu. However, if your child is at high risk from flu due to one or more medical conditions or treatments and can't have the nasal flu vaccine they should have the flu vaccine by injection. For those who may not accept the use of porcine gelatine in medical products, an alternative injectable vaccine is available this year. You should discuss your options with your Immunisation team or state this clearly on the consent form.

### Where can I get more information?

[www.bhamcommunity.nhs.uk/imms](http://www.bhamcommunity.nhs.uk/imms) for more information or contact the team by email or telephone as per contact details below.

### It is important you inform the Immunisation Team if...

- Your child receives this vaccination anywhere else after you return the form to us.
- Your child becomes wheezy in the three days before the immunisation is due.
- Your child increases their asthma medication in the two weeks before the immunisation is due.

Contact the Immunisation Team on **0121 466 3460** or email The team on:  
[BCHNT.BirminghamImms@nhs.net](mailto:BCHNT.BirminghamImms@nhs.net) / [BCHNT.Solihullimms@nhs.net](mailto:BCHNT.Solihullimms@nhs.net)

If you need help or advice completing the consent card please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). Freephone: **0800 917 2855**