



Children aged 2 and 3 year olds (on 31 August 2020): Flu vaccination factsheet

Uptake of the flu vaccination for children aged 2 and 3 (on 31 August 2020) is traditionally low. We're calling for your support in debunking any myths and sharing factual information with any parents of 2-3 year olds you come into contact with.

If you are speaking with a parent of a child aged 2 or 3, ask them if they have had their child vaccinated for flu since September 2020. If they haven't, please talk through the following topics to ensure that they are completely aware of the benefits of the flu vaccine, safety of the vaccine, when to have it and where to get it in a COVID-19 safe way.

1. Benefits

Why are 2 and 3 year olds eligible for a flu vaccine?

- Flu can be particularly nasty for little children. Children also tend to be super-spreaders of flu, so if they get it they are likely to infect other vulnerable or older family members.
- Children who get flu have the same symptoms as adults – including a high fever, chills, aching muscles and joints, extreme tiredness, headache, stuffy nose, dry cough and sore throat. This can last several days or more.
- Some children develop a very high fever or complications of flu, such as a painful ear infection bronchitis or pneumonia and may need hospital treatment.

What are the benefits?

- Having the flu vaccine will help to protect your child from what can be a very nasty illness. **Did you know?** Children under the age of five years have the highest rate of hospital admissions due to flu.
- The vaccine 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 yourchild and those at risk against flu is particularly important whilst COVID-19 is still circulating because people at risk from flu are also vulnerable to the complications of COVID-19.

2. Safety

Is the flu vaccine safe?

- The nasal spray helps protect against flu, it has been given to millions of children worldwide and has an excellent safety record.
- The nasal spray is painless and easy to have.

How does the nasal spray work?

- The nasal spray contains viruses that have been weakened to prevent 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.

Can the vaccine cause flu?

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

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.

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.

3. How often, who and where from

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.
- In addition, protection from the flu vaccine may only last about six months so your child should have the flu vaccine each flu season.
- Your child can have the flu vaccine any time from now until March next year.

I think my child has already had flu, do they need a vaccination?

- Yes. Other viruses can give your child flu-like symptoms, or your child may have had flu but because there is more than one type of flu virus, your child should still have the vaccine even if you think they've had flu.

Where can I get the flu vaccine?

- Children aged 2 and 3 (on 31 August 2020) receive the vaccine through their GP usually by the practice nurse.



- Those aged 4-11 years old receive it in school. If you have a child who is of the eligible age, make sure you sign the consent form allowing them to have the flu vaccine at school.

When will my child get the flu vaccine?

- For those aged 2 and 3, you should receive an invitation for your child to have it at their GP surgery before the winter. If you haven't heard from their GP by early November, contact them directly to make an appointment.

Is the flu vaccine for my child given by injection or nasal spray?

- For most children, the flu vaccine is not usually an injection, just a quick and easy nasal spray.

Is the flu vaccine free?

- Yes. All children aged 2 and 3 (on 31 August 2020) are eligible for a free flu vaccination.

4. COVID-19 safe

Will I be safe when I go for the flu vaccine if COVID-19 is still around?

- While COVID-19 is in circulation, providers of flu vaccination will have measures in place to keep your child safe.
- Staff giving the vaccine will be wearing protective equipment to protect both you and themselves from the virus.
- Appointment times may also be scheduled to reduce numbers in the waiting area or you may be asked not to arrive early.

For more information about flu visit www.nhs.uk/flu-vaccine