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12/11/2025

Providing the 100% vaccination offer for children in schools (Reception to Year 11)

Dear Parent/carer/legal guardian,

Thank you for your time and support for school vaccination teams this year during such a busy time.

Your school-age vaccination provider, Vaccination UK, have either recently or in the past visited your school to offer childhood vaccination. However, children in some classes may have missed this opportunity due to a lower response on consent forms.

We want to ensure that children of parents who have not yet replied can still take up the offer, therefore Vaccination UK may hold further immunisation clinics and may ask to obtain parental consent on the day on the day of vaccination in order to deliver the 100% vaccination offer.

Vaccination UK is also offering a range of accessible options from direct appointment, convenient catch up clinics and additional school visits. More information can be found here. <https://www.schoolvaccination.uk/catch-up-clinics/barking-dagenham>

Thank you again for your great support in protecting London against the vaccine preventable diseases. We appreciate your help in protecting families across London against flu this year. Please let us know any queries or support you require.

Yours sincerely,



Susan Elden

Consultant in Public Health, NHSE - London



Matthew Cole

Director of Public Health, London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about the childhood flu vaccination

Why should children have the flu vaccine?

Flu can be a very unpleasant illness in children causing fever, extreme tiredness, aching muscles and joints, stuffy nose, dry cough, and sore throat. Children usually begin to feel better within about a week. Complications of flu include acute bronchitis, painful ear infections, and pneumonia. Some children may need to go to hospital for treatment, including intensive care.

What are the benefits of the vaccine?

Having the vaccine will help protect your child from what can be a very nasty illness in children. Children under the age of 5 years have the highest rate of hospital admissions due to flu.

It will also 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. It can help you avoid having to take time off work, or other activities, to look after your sick child or if you become sick yourself.

How will the vaccine be given?

For most children, it is given as a nasal spray. If the nasal spray is not suitable for a child, an injection can be given instead, usually into the muscle in the upper arm.

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. This means your child will be better able to fight off flu. 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?

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

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 an injected flu vaccine to avoid a delay in protection
- have needed intensive care due to – asthma or – egg allergic anaphylaxis (Children in these 2 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*

If your child can't have the nasal flu vaccine they should have the flu vaccine by injection. If you are unsure whether your child should get the injected vaccine or the nasal vaccine please check with the school aged immunisation team or the nurse or GP at your surgery.

*See the website at www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/3296/pil for a list of the ingredients of the vaccine Information for parents and carers 11. Children who have been vaccinated with the nasal spray should avoid household contact with people with very severely weakened immune systems (for example those who have just had a bone marrow transplant) for around 2 weeks following vaccination.

Does LAIV contain gelatine derived from pigs (porcine gelatine)?

Yes. The nasal vaccine contains traces of a highly processed form of gelatine (porcine gelatine), which is used in a range of many essential medicines. The gelatine helps to keep the weakened vaccine viruses stable so the vaccine is able to work properly.

The nasal vaccine is easy to give and painless. Each child who has the nasal spray vaccine gets the best protection against flu. It is also considered to be the best at reducing the spread of flu. That way children protect one another and others who might be vulnerable to flu. For those who may not accept the use of porcine gelatine in medical products, an injected flu vaccine is available as an alternative. You should discuss your options with your nurse, doctor, or school aged immunisation team.

Can't my child have the injected vaccine that doesn't contain gelatine?

The nasal vaccine provides the best protection against flu, particularly in young children. It also reduces the risk to, for example, a baby brother or sister who is too young to be vaccinated, as well as other family members (for example, grandparents) who may be more vulnerable to the complications of flu. The injected vaccine is not thought to reduce spread so effectively and so is not being offered to healthy children as part of this programme. 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 more information and other formats, please see:

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/child-flu-vaccine/>
- [GOV.UK: flu vaccination for children: leaflets and posters](#) (including information in alternative languages and formats)
- [YouTube: protecting your child from flu British Sign Language \(BSL\) video](#)