



October 2015

Dear Parents

If your child is aged 2, 3, or 4 years old you should have received a letter in September from your GP inviting your child for a free nasal flu vaccination. We would encourage you to ensure your child receives this protective vaccine; this will help to prevent the spread of influenza in children and also in friends and relatives who may be at risk of complications from flu.

Also children in years 1 and 2 will be offered the vaccine in a school-based programme.

The nasal spray flu vaccine is also for children aged two up to eighteen who are 'at risk' from flu, such as children with long-term health conditions. The vaccine is given as a single dose of nasal spray squirted up each nostril. Not only is it needle-free (a big advantage for children), the nasal spray works even better than the injected flu vaccine. The vaccine is very safe with fewer side effects and has been used for a number of years in the United States and last year across England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

It's quick and painless and will mean your child is less likely to become ill if they come into contact with the flu virus. Its brand name is Fluenz.

Children are good at spreading flu, because they tend to sneeze everywhere and don't use tissues properly or wash their hands. Vaccinating them may also protect others that are vulnerable to flu such as babies, older people, pregnant women and people with serious long-term illnesses. A common complication of flu can be bronchitis; occasionally this can become serious and develop into pneumonia.

Questions and answers are on the back of this letter that will hopefully answer any queries you may have. If you have any further question please do not hesitate in contact your GP, Health Visitor or School Nurse.

If anyone you know falls into the at-risk groups encourage them to have the flu vaccine to prevent them becoming ill.

Yours faithfully

**David Herne**  
Director of Public Health

**Rebecca Bibby**  
Head of Service Starting Life Well

## **What is flu?**

Flu is caused by a virus and cannot be treated with antibiotics. The most common symptoms of flu are fever, chills, headache, aches and pains in the joints and muscles, and extreme tiredness. Healthy individuals usually recover within 2 to 7 days but for some the disease can lead to hospitalisation, permanent disability or even death.

## **Can I avoid flu?**

The best way to avoid catching and spreading flu is by having the vaccination before the flu season starts!

## **If I get flu how do I reduce the risk of spreading it to someone else?**

To prevent spread cover the mouth and nose with a tissue when you sneeze or cough, dispose of the tissues and then wash your hands. "Catch it, Bin it, Kill it"

## **Who should have the flu vaccination?**

Even if you feel healthy you should have the free flu vaccination if you are:

- aged 65 years or over
- age 6 months to 65 years if you have an underlying health condition – speak to your doctor
- living in a residential or nursing home
- the main carer of an older or disabled person
- a household contact of an immuno-compromised person
- a health or social care worker (speak to your employer).
- pregnant
- 2, 3 and 4 year old
- Year 7 and 8 in secondary schools in Salford ( as above).

## **How do I get the flu vaccine?**

The vaccines should be given during October or early November. If you fit the above criteria speak to your GP or Practice Nurse to book a vaccination appointment and get the best possible protection.

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

The annual flu vaccination will protect you against flu this coming winter. No vaccine is 100% effective; however, people who have had the flu vaccine are less likely to get flu. If you do get flu despite having the vaccine, it will probably be milder than if you haven't been vaccinated.

## **Flu vaccines side effects?**

The flu vaccine does not cause flu. However, you may experience some mild side effects after having the vaccine, such as a temperature and aching muscles for a couple of days afterwards. Your arm may feel sore at the site where you were injected. More severe reactions are rare. The flu vaccine only protects against flu, but not other illnesses caused by other viruses, such as the common cold.

## **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 routine childhood vaccines. The vaccination can go ahead if your child has a minor illness such as a cold but may be delayed if your child has an illness that causes a fever.