

## THE ANNUAL INFLUENZA NASAL SPRAY VACCINE



### FACTS AND INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

The nasal spray vaccine for Influenza (Flu) is offered annually to UK primary school children (and from 2020, year 7 secondary school children) in schools each autumn. The U.K is the only country to administer this live vaccine in a school environment.

Uptake is between 60-70%.

The name of the vaccine is Fluenz Tetra or FluMist. It contains four Genetically Modified (GM) strains of the live influenza virus, including H1N1 (Swine Flu).

This vaccine aims to reduce incidences of the Influenza virus. However, due to efficacy and safety concerns, we feel that parents should be fully informed.

#### Is The Vaccine Effective?

The most recent published manufacturers data from 2017/18 showed an overall efficacy rate of 26.9%, with NO efficacy against the H3N2 strain. Figures released by Public Health England stated overall effectiveness as 48.6% for the 2017-18 period. However, the confidence intervals crossed zero which suggests efficacy as claimed is not 'statistically significant' (it is uncertain whether there had been any effect).

Are there any benefits to your child in receiving this vaccine which are worth the potential risks?

#### Is The Vaccine Safe?

Fluenz should not be offered on medical grounds if;

- a child is wheezing or suffers from Asthma,
- has a severe allergy to eggs,
- is allergic to gentamicin, gelatin or any of the other ingredients,
- has a weakened immune system as a result of a diseases such as cancer, blood disorders, prescribed medicines or other treatments,
- takes aspirin or medicines containing aspirin,
- has ever had a life-threatening reaction to Influenza vaccinations.

Recently vaccinated children may be responsible for shedding the GM virus and cases have been documented where GM strains have caused Influenza in others (known as transmission). Studies have shown that shedding occurs in more than 50% of vaccinated children on days 2 and 3, dropping to 3% by day 11 and reducing to 0% by day 25. Therefore, manufacturers advise that people who are immuno-compromised should avoid contact with a child who has recently received the nasal Flu vaccine.

The U.K packaging leaflet lists Guillain-Barré syndrome as a reported, rare event.

The U.S packaging leaflet for the same product lists Meningitis as a reported, rare event.

In 2016 the Medicines & Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) stated there is no evidence for a link between Fluenz and Narcolepsy, yet the European Medicines Agency stated Narcolepsy and Cataplexy are both known to be 'potential risks' associated with Fluenz.

In 2020, an eleven year old girl was finally awarded a vaccine damage payment of £120,000 from The Department of Work & Pensions for a Fluenz vaccine given in 2014, which caused Narcolepsy and severe disability.

#### Please be aware that:

- there are around a dozen cases annually of severe allergic reaction (Anaphylaxis occurs in three in every million doses),
- several deaths have been reported after Fluenz,
- no data exists regarding the possible effects of Fluenz on male or female fertility,
- GM viruses have never been studied for long term side effects,
- Fluenz is not safe for children under the age of 2, or pregnant women.
- the vaccine contains MSG (Monosodium Glutamate).



#### What Are The Side Effects?

The most commonly listed side effects (affecting 1 in 10 people) are very similar to a Flu infection: decreased appetite, nasal congestion, sore throat, muscle pain, malaise (feeling unwell) and a fever.

In addition, there has been a very high number of reported cases of vomiting and diarrhoea to the MHRA as well as 5 reported deaths.

Some recipients may experience a severe allergic reaction: shortness of breath and swelling of the face or tongue (affecting up to 1 in 10,000 people).

**ALL SIDE-EFFECTS, NO MATTER HOW MINOR, SHOULD BE REPORTED USING THE YELLOW CARD SCHEME:**



[www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard](http://www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard)

#### Are schools the best place to deliver Fluenz?

Gross errors in administration of the Fluenz programme have meant that children have been wrongly vaccinated. Children with Asthma have mistakenly been given this vaccine, several with serious consequences, as well as children whose parents did not consent. This has resulted in unnecessary hospitalisations, legal action and of course huge distress.

#### Be Informed!

**Vaccination is not mandatory within the U.K. You have the right to refuse if you have concerns.**

Those observing Halal, Kosher, Vegetarian or Vegan practices should be aware that this vaccine includes pork gelatine.

Recipients of the vaccine should avoid salicylates (found in Aspirin products) for 4 weeks,

Parents wishing their children to avoid accidental vaccination, inhalation of particles or shedding (especially those immuno-compromised) may consider keeping them at home on the day of the vaccination and during the shedding period.

Parents should also be aware that children who are kept off school on the day of vaccination and/or during the 'shedding period' may not have the absence authorised. There is currently much disparity on this issue in schools across the U.K.