

**SWINE FLU
INFORMATION**

www.direct.gov.uk/swineflu

0800 1 513 513

**SWINE FLU
VACCINATION:
information for
parents of children
over six months
and under five
years old**

Flu. Protect yourself and others.



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Please note: references to 'young children' throughout this leaflet refer to children who are over six months and under five years old.

About this leaflet

All children over six months and under five years of age are now being offered the swine flu vaccine. This leaflet has been developed to provide parents and carers with information about the vaccination.

What is swine flu?

Swine flu is a respiratory disease caused by a new strain of flu virus. The seasonal flu vaccines that are already available don't protect against swine flu, so a new flu vaccine has been developed.

How serious is swine flu?

For most people, swine flu is mild. It comes on quickly and generally lasts for around a week. Patients with swine flu typically have a fever or a high temperature (over 38°C / 100.4°F) and two or more of the following symptoms: unusual tiredness, headache, runny nose, sore throat, shortness of breath or cough, loss of appetite, aching muscles, diarrhoea or vomiting.

Some people are more likely to be seriously ill with swine flu. These can include young children over six months and under five years of age with no underlying health conditions, people who have long-term health conditions, pregnant women or people whose immune system is affected by a disease or treatment for a disease. They may need to go to hospital and, in the very worst cases, some may die. Vaccination against swine flu is important in protecting people from catching swine flu.

About the swine flu vaccine

Vaccines have been developed to protect against the virus that causes swine flu. There are two different brands of vaccine – Pandemrix and Celvapan.

Is it the same as the seasonal flu vaccination?

No, the swine flu vaccine is different from the seasonal flu vaccination that's offered every year. The seasonal flu vaccine does not protect against swine flu. If your child is usually advised to have the seasonal flu vaccination, they should still have it.

The seasonal flu vaccine does not protect against swine flu.

Why are all young children now being offered the vaccine?

Young children are being offered the vaccine to protect them from swine flu and its possible complications. They seem to be particularly vulnerable to severe illness as a result of swine flu, resulting in hospitalisation. Children under five have significantly higher rates of hospitalisation than children aged five to fifteen. Healthy children in this age group are also far more likely to be hospitalised as a result of swine flu than healthy people in other age groups. They also have high rates of admission to critical care and some children under five have died as a result of swine flu. Vaccination is the best way to protect young children from possible complications.

Are there are plans for introducing the vaccine to younger babies?

Neither of the swine flu vaccines used in the UK vaccination programme are licensed by the European regulators for use in babies under 6 months old.

This is partly because there are no data about the effectiveness or safety of the vaccines in babies below six months old, partly because it is so difficult to carry out vaccine trials with infants.

Why is it a good idea to get my child vaccinated?

Even if your child is healthy, it is important to get them vaccinated against swine flu.

The vaccination will help:

- protect your child against swine flu
- protect your family and other people who are close to your child as it is less likely they will pass on the virus
- protect your child against future waves of infection caused by the swine flu virus
- reduce the spread of the virus.

Who can't have the swine flu vaccine?

There are only a few people who cannot have the swine flu vaccine. The vaccines should not be given to anyone who has had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of the vaccine or any component of the vaccine. If you are worried that this may apply to your child, talk to your GP or practice nurse.

What about people with egg allergies?

The Celvapan vaccine is not prepared using eggs, so your child should have this vaccine if they have a severe allergy to eggs.

The Pandemrix vaccine is prepared in hens' eggs in the same way that seasonal flu vaccines are. It should not be given to people who have had a confirmed anaphylactic reaction (experiencing shock or difficulty breathing) after being exposed to egg products.

There are two vaccines – which one will my child be given?

The majority of children are likely to be given Pandemrix. However, if they have had a confirmed anaphylactic reaction to eggs, they will be given Celvapan.

How many doses of vaccine will my child need?

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation has advised that the dosage for children aged over six months and below ten years should be just one dose of Pandemrix (using half an adult dose) unless the child is immunosuppressed or has an immune deficiency. Children in this age group who are immunosuppressed or have an immune deficiency should receive two doses of Pandemrix (using half an adult dose) given at least three weeks apart. Parents are advised to look for signs of fever following swine flu vaccination.

Children who require Celvapan will need two doses given at least three weeks apart.

What else do I need to know?

Can the swine flu vaccine be given at the same time as other vaccines?

Yes, it is normal for a number of routine childhood vaccinations to be given at the same time, but they will probably be administered in different parts of the body.

Are there any side-effects?

All vaccinations can produce side-effects such as redness, soreness and swelling at the site of the injection. Flu vaccines can cause symptoms like fever, headache and muscle aches, but they are much milder than the flu itself and only last a day or so.

If you think your child has experienced a more serious side-effect to Pandemrix or Celvapan, please inform your GP and also report it to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency at www.mhra.gov.uk/swineflu

The vaccine is not live and cannot cause swine flu.

How can we be sure these new vaccines are safe and effective?

Pandemrix and Celvapan are both licensed vaccines. When they licensed the vaccines, the European Commission carefully considered all the available evidence and recommended that they could be used.

In the UK, and elsewhere in Europe, swine flu vaccine has been used to immunise large

numbers of people, including young children, many of whom have underlying health conditions which make them particularly at risk from swine flu. The side-effects most frequently reported are non-serious and in line with expectations.

My child has already had swine flu. Does he/she still need the vaccine?

Only a small proportion of swine flu cases are confirmed by a laboratory test, so most people cannot be certain they have had swine flu. Young children should still have the vaccine, unless they have had a positive laboratory test for swine flu. It is safe to be vaccinated even if you have already had swine flu.

If you want more information

For general information about swine flu:
www.direct.gov.uk/swineflu
0800 1 513 513

Calls to this number are free from landlines and mobile phones.