

# Flu Porcine MECC

## **What is the flu?**

The flu is a very infectious disease caused by a virus. It mainly affects the respiratory system and its symptoms include fever, chills, aching muscles, joint pain, headache and feeling very tired.

Flu can be very dangerous and can lead to serious complications, even death. The very young and the elderly are more likely of having complications.

Each winter, hundreds of thousands of people see their GP and tens of thousands are hospitalised because of flu. Deaths related to flu range from around 4,000-14,000 per year with an average of around 8,000 per year.

During the 2017-2018 winter flu season, 16 flu-related deaths were reported in children aged between 0 to 17 years (Public Health England, 2018).

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/740606/Surveillance of influenza and other respiratory viruses in the UK 2017 to 2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/740606/Surveillance%20of%20influenza%20and%20other%20respiratory%20viruses%20in%20the%20UK%2017%20to%2018.pdf)

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## **Why should I let my child be vaccinated against flu?**

Apart from protecting your child, getting the flu vaccine helps to reduce the spread of the disease. This reduces the chance of passing on the flu virus to other people who may be at greater risk if they catch the flu. This includes the very young, the very old and those who have a weakened immune system.

This means that by having your child vaccinated, you might end up saving the life of a grandparent, an uncle with heart disease or a new baby you have just welcomed into the family. Flu can kill but you can help protect your family and friends who are most vulnerable.

## **How is the vaccine given?**

The flu vaccine is given as a single spray squirted up each nostril. It is needle-free, quick and painless.

It can safely be given at the same time as all other routine childhood vaccines.

The vaccine contains live forms of flu virus which have been weakened. These stimulate the immune system but do not cause disease in healthy people.

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## **Is there gelatine in the vaccine?**

Yes, gelatine is in the vaccine. Gelatine is a substance derived from the collagen of animals.

Porcine gelatine comes from collagen in pigs. All forms of gelatine in medicines are manufactured under strict hygiene and safety regulations.

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## **Why is gelatine used in flu vaccines?**

To stabilise vaccines so that they remain safe and effective during storage. However, the gelatine is so highly purified and broken down, tests have shown that the final product does not contain porcine DNA. (<http://vk.ovg.ox.ac.uk/vaccine-ingredients>)

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## **What do religious leaders and the World Health Organisation (WHO) say about gelatine being in the vaccine?**

- In 2001, the WHO reported the results of a meeting of religious scholars from across the Islamic world, who looked at products forbidden under Sharia. They recommended that medicines containing gelatine were permissible under Sharia, for observant Muslims, due to transformation of the product.  
<http://www.immunize.org/talking-about-vaccines/porcine.pdf>
- The European Council of Fatwa and Research ruled that if the amount of porcine sources is insignificant in the vaccine, then it is too small to make any difference (2003).  
[https://www.who.int/immunization\\_standards/vaccine\\_quality/englishtranslation.pdf](https://www.who.int/immunization_standards/vaccine_quality/englishtranslation.pdf)
- The Islamic Organisation for Medical Sciences (IOMS) in 1995, used istihala to declare medicines containing porcine gelatine to be Islamically permissible however their decree does express that this permission was not an ideal scenario.

- According to Jewish laws, there is no problem with porcine or other animal derived ingredients in non-oral products. This includes vaccines, including those administered via the nose, injections, suppositories, creams and ointments  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/386842/2902998\\_PHE\\_FluPorcine\\_QAforParents\\_FINAL\\_CT.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/386842/2902998_PHE_FluPorcine_QAforParents_FINAL_CT.pdf)
  - The Fatwa Council in Malaysia and internationally have ruled that vaccination is permissible for the purpose of treatment and prevention, as refusing vaccination will result in greater harm  
(<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1876034117302411>)
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## **Who to contact**

For advice about the flu vaccine or about your child's appointment, please contact Vaccination UK on 01902 682674

For general information about the flu vaccine, please contact Dudley Councils' Health Protection Team on 01384 816 246 or on 01384 815 097