

Seasonal And Swine Flu Vaccination 2009

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Seasonal flu vaccine

Every year, children with severe or complex heart conditions are advised to have the seasonal flu vaccine because they are at risk of severe or complicated disease if they get flu. The same applies this year, and your GP should contact you as soon as the seasonal flu vaccine becomes available. If you are not contacted you should call your GP's surgery instead.

Swine flu vaccine

In addition, this year, the H1N1 swine flu vaccination will initially be offered to those at highest risk of severe disease from flu, that is children (over 6 months of age) and adults with underlying health conditions including severe, complex or uncorrected heart conditions. The seasonal flu vaccine will not protect your child against swine flu or vice versa, so to be protected against both these types of flu your child will need to have both vaccines.

If your child has had **confirmed** swine flu they do not need to have a swine flu vaccination. If your child is **thought** to have had swine flu but it was not confirmed by samples from nose or throat processed in a laboratory, then you cannot be certain that it was swine flu – it may have been a different respiratory virus – and it is best for them to have the swine flu vaccine. If your child has severe egg allergy, discuss with your specialist as attention may need to be given to which swine flu vaccine preparation they are given.

Schedule for vaccination

The seasonal flu vaccine is likely to be available first this autumn/winter and the swine flu vaccine a little later, but the seasonal flu and swine flu vaccines can be given at the same time as other vaccines and they can be given together. The recommended schedule for swine flu vaccination in children is 2 doses, 3 weeks apart.

Clinical trial of swine flu vaccines

You may be interested to know that there is a clinical trial for swine flu vaccines in children (run by the Health Protection Agency) through a number of hospitals and vaccine research centres : St. George's London, Southampton, Royal Devon & Exeter, Bristol and Oxford; visit www.swineflutrial.org for more information. This trial is open to all children (healthy children and those with underlying health conditions) between the ages of 6 months and 12 years (before 13th birthday) who meet the trial conditions, so you may like to use this as a way to get your children vaccinated against swine flu sooner than would otherwise be possible.

Medication to prevent or treat swine flu

Aside from the swine flu vaccination programme, there is still effective medication to prevent swine flu (prophylaxis) or to treat it – this is usually Tamiflu. The advice remains unchanged for using Tamiflu to prevent illness in those with long term heart conditions if they have direct close contact with someone with swine flu, either in their household or at school. If children with severe or complex heart conditions are exposed to swine flu in this way, they should be offered Tamiflu as soon as possible to prevent them getting flu, rather than waiting for symptoms to develop. Discuss this with your child's GP or Cardiologist.

RSV vaccination

Remember that this winter many colds and flu-like illnesses may not be caused by swine flu, but by the range of respiratory viruses that normally cause these illnesses. RSV (or Bronchiolitis) is one of the common viruses which can affect babies and young children. There is a special vaccine against RSV which can help certain babies and infants with severe lung disease and also a few with complex or severe heart conditions. Your child's Cardiologist will advise if your baby or infant needs this vaccine.

This information has been provided by Dr. Esse Menson, Consultant in Infectious Diseases, Evelina Children's Hospital.

There is a very good information sheet on the ECHO website, written last winter by Dr. Esse Menson and Dr. Thomas Krasemann, which can be used in conjunction with the above guidelines. Just visit www.echo-evelina.org.uk/information/flu-jabs

The current up to date guidelines from the Evelina hospital regarding swine flu diagnosis, prevention and treatment are contained on its website : www.echo-evelina.org.uk/information/swineflu