

**09 September 2014**

## **Protecting children and our community from flu**

Children are 2-3 times more likely to be ill with flu than adults. As anyone who has had flu will know, the fever, aches and chills can put you out of action for days, and in some cases lead to complications and health problems which need hospital treatment.

This year, the childhood flu immunisation programme will be extended to all children from 2 years of age up to and including children in P7. Those children offered the flu vaccine will be better protected are less likely to spread flu to others; particularly those who are older or have serious health conditions.

The vaccine will be offered to children aged 2 to 5 who are not attending school at their GP practice from October. Parents should look out for information from their GP on how to make an appointment to receive the vaccine.

Primary school aged children will be offered the vaccine at school. An information leaflet and consent form will be sent home in the child's school bag Parents should look out for, and return, the consent form so their child can receive the free flu vaccine.

The vaccine is being offered as a quick, painless and needle-free nasal spray, with only a tiny amount sprayed into each nostril. This type of vaccine was safely given to thousands of children across the UK last year, during the pilot scheme. Children who cannot have the nasal spray may be offered an alternative injectable version.

Dr Tim Patterson, Flu Immunisation Coordinator at NHS Borders, said: "Flu can be very unpleasant for children, and in some cases can develop into more serious health complications such as bronchitis, pneumonia and middle ear infection. If they get the vaccine they will be protected themselves and at a reduced risk of infecting others."

He added: "The vaccine is quick and painless and was safely given to children last year. Side effects such as headaches, muscle aches and runny noses are possible, but are usually mild.

"Even the healthiest of children can become seriously ill as a result of flu, so I'd urge parents to make sure their child is vaccinated."

Find out more about the flu vaccine for children at [www.immunisationscotland.org.uk/childflu](http://www.immunisationscotland.org.uk/childflu) or call the NHS inform helpline on 0800 22 44 88.

**Ends**

**Contacts:**

For further information, contact Communications on 01896 828287 or 828261.