

NHS Lothian encourages parents to have schoolchildren vaccinated against flu before the winter

NHS Lothian is encouraging parents and carers to help keep children healthy over the school terms this winter by getting them vaccinated against flu.

All primary and secondary school pupils are eligible for the vaccine, which is given in schools as a painless nasal spray.

Getting children vaccinated against flu reduces the chances of them missing class time and other activities due to illness and helps prevent them passing the illness to vulnerable family members.

Consent packs containing a letter, leaflet and consent form will be sent home to parents and carers of school children on return to school in August. Secondary pupils can self-consent, though they are encouraged to speak to a parent or carer first.

Letters with appointment details for children aged two to five years who are not yet at school will begin to arrive at homes from September.

Parents and carers should call the number on their child's letter if their child has missed their appointment or needs to

reschedule.

The nasal spray is a quick and painless way of delivering the flu vaccine to children and should start to provide protection within 10-14 days.

Pat Wynne, Nurse Director for NHS Lothian who is overseeing this year's programme said: "Getting the nasal spray flu vaccine is the best way to protect your child and those around them. The flu virus changes over time so your child needs to get the vaccine each year to help stay protected.

"Please look out for your child's consent pack, which they will receive through school from August, and ensure that their completed consent form is returned on time if you wish them to receive the vaccine."

Public Health Minister Maree Todd said: "Schools are back but we want to keep flu out, which is why all primary and secondary school children are being offered the free flu vaccine.

"Flu can be serious, even for healthy children, so the vaccine offers the best possible protection for your child and those around them who may be more vulnerable to flu. Getting your child vaccinated can help prevent them getting sick, from spreading flu, and requiring time off school and away from other activities."

School children will receive the flu vaccine in school between September and December. Parents of two to five-year-olds who are not yet at school will be given information about where their child will be vaccinated in their appointment letter. In a small number of cases, the nasal spray may not be suitable, and the vaccine can be given as an injection in the arm instead.

For more information about the flu vaccine, visit www.nhsinform.scot/childflu or call 0800 030 8013.