

NHS Lothian urges flu vaccine for children this winter

NHS Lothian is urging parents and carers to sign up for the flu vaccine for their children's protection this winter.

The nasal flu vaccine, which the health board described as a “wee scoosh” up the nose, is quick and painless, yet it offers vital protection against the illness within 10 to 14 days.

The “wee scoosh” also helps stop the virus in its tracks and being spread between families and on to more vulnerable children and adults, especially those most at risk of becoming seriously ill with flu.

The flu vaccine is offered to all school-aged pupils, all children aged two to five-years-old not yet in school and children aged six months to two-years-old with a condition that puts them at increased risk of flu. Home-educated young people and young people not attending mainstream education are also eligible.

Children aged from two to five are being offered vaccination from the start of the programme to ensure they receive the earliest protection and prevent the virus spreading.

Pat Wynne, Nurse Director for Primary and Community Care, who oversees the delivery of the winter vaccines programme in Lothian, said it was crucial to be vaccinated every year.

He added: “The flu virus changes every year, that’s why it’s important to get an annual vaccination so that your child has

the most up to date protection.

“Getting your child vaccinated against flu can also protect them from other infections with bacteria that can follow flu and prevent them from getting sick and missing out on nursery, school or other activities.

“Please look out for your child’s appointment letter by post or a consent form in their school bag. Be sure to complete and return the consent form to their school to ensure they get the vital protection this year’s flu vaccine offers.”

Appointment letters for children aged six months to two years at risk and those aged two to five-years-old not yet in school have been posted with details of where and when the vaccine will be given.

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

Consent forms and further information will be sent home to parents and carers of school children.

Secondary pupils can self-consent but are encouraged to speak to a parent or carer first. All primary and secondary school pupils with consent to be given the flu vaccine nasal spray will receive this at school starting in early September through to December 2024.

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