

Dear Parent/Guardian,

**Your child's annual nasal flu vaccination is due in the next academic year.**

This vaccination program runs every year for all children in Primary schools from Reception upwards. As of September 2021, the annual vaccination has been introduced for all Secondary school students up to and including Year 11. The children's flu vaccine has been clinically proven to be safe and effective. It is administered as a pain-free nasal spray that goes up both nostrils.

As a result of non-pharmaceutical interventions in place for COVID-19 (such as mask-wearing, physical and social distancing, and restricted international travel) influenza activity levels were extremely low globally in 2020 to 2021. As a result, a lower level of population immunity against influenza is expected in 2021 to 2022. It is expected that winter 2021-2022 will be the first winter in the UK when seasonal influenza virus (and other respiratory viruses) will co-circulate alongside COVID-19.

Seasonal influenza and COVID-19 viruses have the potential to add substantially to the winter pressures usually faced by the NHS, particularly if infection waves from both viruses coincide. The timing and magnitude of potential influenza and COVID-19 infection waves for winter 2021-2022 are currently unknown, but mathematical modelling indicates the 2021-2022 influenza season in the UK could be up to 50% larger than typically seen.

Influenza vaccination is therefore an important priority this coming autumn to reduce morbidity and mortality associated with influenza, and to reduce hospitalisations during a time when the NHS and social care may also be managing winter outbreaks of COVID-19.

Flu is caused by a virus which the vaccination helps to immunise children against. It can be a very unpleasant illness for children, with the potential to lead to serious problems, such as bronchitis and pneumonia. Children spread flu easily and vaccinating them also helps to protect others who are vulnerable to flu, such as babies and older people.

When the school year commences in September 2021, your child's school will provide you with the opportunity to give consent online via a website link and inform you of the date when the vaccination session will take place. If this is not your preferred method of consenting, the school can also provide you with a paper consent form to be completed and returned or the phone number to provide consent verbally.

The flu program is strictly an 'opt-in' service and children who have not been given parental consent will not receive the vaccination, so please keep an eye out for the correspondence from school.

If you have any queries, please contact the healthcare team on the number below.

Yours sincerely

**The East Riding Immunisation Team**

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