

Vaccinations in schools

- 🚌 Introduction
- 🚌 General
- 🚌 Nasal flu vaccine
- 🚌 HPV
- 🚌 Three-in-one booster

Introduction

Throughout the course of their school lives, depending on gender, pupils will be offered two or three vaccinations. The first, for both boys and girls, is the nasal flu vaccination, usually administered to children in school Years 1-3.

Secondly, girls aged between 12 and 13 (school Year 8) can choose to take the HPV vaccine, which protects against some types of cervical cancer.

Finally, in Year 9, all pupils are offered the three-in-one teenage booster; this tops up the effects of the baby and pre-school vaccinations against diphtheria, polio and tetanus.

This document will explain the processes a school must follow when hosting vaccinations, and shed some light on the diseases and viruses pupils will be vaccinated against.

General

In all instances of vaccinations in schools, the healthcare teams that administer the treatments may request that your school:

- Plans with external healthcare teams to develop the best strategy for implementing the vaccination programme.
- Plans dates and suitable locations for the sessions; the local healthcare teams will outline their specific requirements.
- Provides parents with the specific material regarding the vaccination. Consent forms, invitation letters and information about the vaccine will all be required from parents.

The teams may also need assistance with other formalities of organising the vaccination sessions, including the distribution and collection of consent forms.

Nasal flu vaccine

The nasal vaccine is a quick and painless method that protects children against the flu. Vaccinations are usually administered around October and November, before flu tends to circulate.

Schools, alongside pupils and parents, will benefit from administering the nasal vaccination; a reduction in absence with fewer pupils getting ill; promoting a healthy learning and working environment; and providing an opportunity to teach pupils the benefits of vaccination.

Pupils may suffer some minor side effects, such as a blocked nose, headache, drowsiness, or loss of appetite. If a pupil does become unwell after receiving the vaccination, and the healthcare team is still on site, seek advice directly from them. In the event of a pupil falling ill when the healthcare team has left, please follow your school's procedure for sick and unwell pupils, and contact the healthcare team to ensure they can report the incident and the time the vaccine was administered.

HPV

During their time at secondary school, female pupils will be offered the HPV vaccination, which is administered in two parts; the first when the pupils are in Year 8, aged 12 or 13; the female pupils will be contacted between six and 12 months later for the second part of the vaccination; however, this can be administered up to 24 months after the initial jab. In order to be fully vaccinated, girls will need both jabs.

HPV, or human papillomavirus, is very common between females and males; however, a vaccination for males has not yet been developed. Due to its commonality, it is likely most people will get infected at some point. In most women the virus does not cause cervical cancer; however, having the vaccine is very important because the risk is not known.

The HPV jab will reduce the chance of getting cervical cancer by 70 percent. In addition to this, the vaccination also protects against the two types of HPV that cause the majority of genital warts.

Like the nasal flu vaccination, and three-in-one booster, the side effects from the HPV jab are quite mild. Stinging and soreness in the arm could last up to a couple of days. More serious side effects are very rare, and the healthcare team undertaking the vaccinations will know how to deal with these.

All vaccinations undergo rigorous tests, and are forced to meet high safety standards before being used.

Three-in-one booster

The three-in-one booster, given to pupils in Year 9, is administered as a single injection, but protects against three diseases; diphtheria, tetanus and polio. This will be the final instalment of this vaccine, the first being issued to pupils before they started school.

The jab may cause some minor pain, including soreness on the area of the arm and swelling. More serious effects are rare but these can include fever, headache, dizziness, feeling sick and swollen glands. Any side effects caused after the vaccine will be similar to those caused by the disease, but much milder. The nurses administering the jab and the school nurse will be able to advise pupils if there are any concerns.

Bibliography

NHS (2014) 'Your guide to the HPV vaccination' [Accessed: 14 October]

NHS (2016) 'Immunisations for young people' [Accessed: 14 October]

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