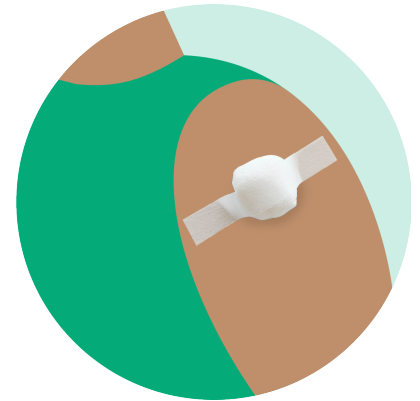


Some children become seriously ill from influenza

In Norway, 80,000 children are at increased risk of becoming seriously ill due to influenza.



Children with the following illnesses and conditions should have the influenza vaccine every year:

- Chronic lung disease (including asthma)
- Heart disease
- Chronic neurological disease or injury (e.g. epilepsy and conditions that affect lung function)
- Immunodeficiency as a result of illness or treatment (such as organ transplant or cancer)
- Liver or kidney failure
- Diabetes
- Severe obesity
- Other serious or chronic illness where influenza poses a serious health risk, following an individual assessment by a doctor (e.g. children with congenital chromosome abnormalities and genetic syndromes)

- Premature children. The risk is highest for children born before week 32 of the pregnancy. Annual vaccination is recommended from six months (chronological age) up to five years.

What is influenza and why can it be serious?

Influenza is an infectious disease that is caused by the influenza virus. The virus causes infection of the nose, throat and lungs. Influenza is not the same as a cold.

Influenza symptoms often develop rapidly, with high fever, muscle pain, headaches and fatigue. Some children may vomit or have diarrhoea.

The influenza viruses cause epidemics in Norway every year from October to May. Influenza is common among children. During a normal influenza season, 20-30% of all children will become infected.

Especially dangerous for some people

Around 500 children become so seriously ill every year from influenza that they have to be treated in hospital. Most of these are basically healthy children, but some have illnesses or conditions which mean they are around four times more likely to become seriously ill as a result of influenza than healthy children.

In Norway, up to 80,000 children between the ages of 0 and 17 are at greater risk of becoming seriously ill from influenza. The largest group comprises children with asthma or another lung disease. In addition, there are several thousand children with heart disease, diabetes and neurological diseases such as epilepsy. These children may experience worsening of their original condition and be prone to additional illnesses, such as pneumonia, if they become infected with influenza.



For more information, see
<https://www.fhi.no/va/barne-vaksinasjonsprogrammet/>

Deaths among children due to influenza are rare, but when they do happen, they usually concern children with an illness or condition that makes them particularly vulnerable to serious illness.

Vaccines provide the best protection

Influenza vaccination is the easiest and most effective way of preventing influenza and the serious consequences of the illness. Children with risk conditions should therefore be given the vaccine every autumn. The influenza vaccine can also help to relieve influenza symptoms in those who become infected despite having been vaccinated.

Two types of influenza vaccine for children

In Norway, two types of influenza vaccine have been approved for children: a vaccine which is administered by injection (approved for all children from six months) and a vaccine which is administered by nasal spray (approved for the age group 2-17 years).

The nasal spray vaccine should not be used by children with severe asthma, active breathing difficulties, immunodeficiency or a cleft palate. Neither of the vaccines should be given in the event of known allergy to influenza vaccine.

In the case of children aged 6 months to 9 years who have not been vaccinated or had influenza previously, two doses of influenza vaccine at least four weeks apart are recommended, regardless of vaccine type.

What do the vaccines contain?

The injection vaccine contains pieces of influenza virus, sterile water, various salts and other excipients.

The nasal spray vaccine contains live, attenuated influenza viruses that have been altered so that they can only survive for a short period of time in the nasal mucosa and cannot survive elsewhere in the body.

It also contains sterile water, salts, sugar and gelatine.

How effective are the vaccines?

The effect of the vaccine depends on the type of influenza virus that causes the infection, how similar the vaccine is to the influenza viruses that are circulating among the population, and which vaccine is used. The health of the child can also have an impact on the effect.

The effect of influenza vaccine varies from year to year, but averages around 60 percent. Some people can therefore contract influenza even if they have been vaccinated, but the vaccine can reduce the severity of the disease and the risk of serious illness.

Is the influenza vaccine safe?

All medicines and vaccines can cause side effects, but not everyone experiences them. Influenza vaccines only very rarely cause serious side effects.

They have been in use for many years and, over the past few decades, around 500 million doses have been administered annually.

- The injection vaccine may cause tenderness, swelling and redness around the injection site, while the nasal spray vaccine may cause a blocked and runny nose.
- Both vaccines can cause mild malaise, muscle pain and fever for 1-2 days after administration of the vaccine.
- Allergic reactions and other serious side effects are rare.
- None of the vaccines will give your child influenza.

Where can my child get the vaccine?

Vaccination usually takes place from October to December.

Parents and guardians can check the website of their municipality or GP for information on child vaccination. Children who are in hospital or being treated or followed up by a specialist can have the vaccine there.

How much does the vaccine cost?

The cost of the vaccine varies. Speak to your GP or check your municipality's website to enquire about the cost.



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