

# Your quick guide to: Immunisations

Parents often raise concerns about immunisations in children with allergies.

This is because some vaccines may contain substances which can, in very rare cases, cause an allergic reaction. However, in practice, allergy to vaccines is very unusual.

It used to be thought that the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine should not be given to egg-allergic children. In fact, the information which is often provided with the vaccine continues to warn that egg-allergic children may react to the vaccine! This is incorrect. The measles vaccine is not grown in whole eggs, but in cells which are derived from hens – and these cells do NOT contain any egg protein. Therefore, the MMR vaccine is safe in all egg-allergic children (including those with severe allergy) and all egg-allergic children should have the vaccine.

Vaccinations remain the safest way to protect against very serious infections. Speak to your GP or Nurse practitioner for further advice.

## Severe asthma or active wheezing

The live attenuated influenza vaccine given as a nasal spray (Fluenz®) is not recommended for children with active wheezing at the time of vaccination or in the 72 hours preceding vaccinations, or who have required oral steroids in the previous 2 weeks.

## Egg allergy

Inactivated influenza vaccines, given by injection, that are egg-free or have a very low ovalbumin content are safe for individuals with egg allergy (des Roches et al., 2012).

The BSACI (British Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology) have advised that children with egg allergy can safely be vaccinated with the nasal influenza vaccine in any setting including your GP surgery and schools. Facilities should be available, and staff trained to recognise and treat anaphylaxis.

The exception is for children who have previously required admission to an

intensive care unit for severe anaphylaxis to egg; these children should be referred to a specialist for immunisation in hospital. Inactivated (injected) influenza vaccines that are egg free or have an ovalbumin content < 0.12 µg/ml may be used safely in individuals with egg allergy, in primary care.

Further information can be found in the Department of Health Green Book, the reference for all health care professionals administering vaccines.

The vaccines against yellow fever and typhus are produced in a similar way to influenza. However, this vaccine is not a routine part of the UK immunisation schedule and are usually only given to people travelling abroad to high-risk destinations.

All available information about immunisation and allergy points to the fact that immunisation in children who are at high risk of developing allergy is safe and not a factor in their future allergic conditions.

## Key facts:

The **MMR vaccine is safe** in all **egg-allergic children** (including those with severe allergy)

The live attenuated influenza vaccine given as a nasal spray (**Fluenz®**) is **not recommended for children with active wheezing** at the time of vaccination

Children previously admitted to intensive care unit for **severe anaphylaxis to egg** should be referred to a specialist for **immunisation in hospital** for the nasal **influenza vaccine**

## Allergy UK Helpline

Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm:  
Call: 01322 619 898  
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Visit us at:

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## Clinical contributions:

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