Vaccinate your child against influenza

Krakow continues to implement the vaccination programme titled "**Influenza incidence prevention programme for children aged 6-60 months in the Municipality of Krakow**". Children who can participate in it must:

- be 6 months to 5 years old (age will be confirmed on the basis of PESEL number),
- reside in the Municipality of Krakow,
- be eligible for vaccination, based on a positive medical examination result, and whose parents or legal guardians agree to participation in the programme; the parent or legal guardian, reporting for vaccination, will be required to present an identity document,
- **free vaccination will also be available to children of foreigners, including citizens of Ukraine, who have a PESEL number** and whose parents/guardians agree to participation in the vaccination,
- in the vaccination.

The criteria for exclusion from the programme include: lack of written consent from the parent/legal guardian to participate in the programme, presence of contraindications to the influenza vaccine, vaccination performed privately during the flu season.
Termination of participation in the Programme is possible at any stage at the request of the participant. Termination of participation in the Programme without vaccination shall be effected by verbal or written notification of resignation by the Programme's participant and recording of this fact by the medical entity implementing the Programme. Removal of the participant from the Programme may also take place if the exclusion criteria occur.

Why should children be vaccinated against influenza?

Medical guidelines indicate the validity of vaccinating children against influenza due to the fact that it can be dangerous for infants and young children, even more so during the COVID-19 contagion period.
Due to the immaturity of the immune system, influenza infections most often occur in children. Children are therefore the group most vulnerable to the influenza virus and flu-like illnesses. Importantly, children are considered vectors of infection in the general population, hence vaccinating a child can protect other family members from possible illness. This will result in reduced social and economic consequences associated with absence from work or the need to organize childcare.
The purpose of vaccinating children against influenza is not only to avoid getting sick, but above all to avoid serious post-influenza complications. The highest risk of serious forms of influenza or complications occurs in children under the age of 5, but also in people over 65, pregnant women or chronically ill patients.

Where can children be vaccinated?

In the Stefan Żeromski Specialist Hospital in Kraków, os. Na Skarpie 66, building H.

Registration
Registration via telephone and patient information:
No.: 734 218 445
from Monday to Friday, between 8:00 and 12:00

The hospital provides information about the Programme: at the point where the Programme is implemented, by telephone and on its website.
During registration, the day and time of patient admission will be designated.

Patients will be admitted Monday through Saturday at the following times:

- Monday: 14.00 - 20.00
- Tuesday: 14.00 - 20.00
- Wednesday: 14.00 - 20:00
- Thursday: 8.00 - 20.00
- Friday: 14:00 - 20.00
- Saturday: 8.00-11.00 (once a month)

The Programme provides free medical examination of the child for vaccination eligibility purposes and administration of the vaccine by injection or nasal spray. In children previously unvaccinated against influenza, it is necessary to administer two doses of the vaccine 4 weeks apart.

Parents/guardians will remain with their child in the facility for about 30 minutes after vaccination to observe behaviour for the occurrence of a post-vaccination reaction. At the same time, the Programme implementer will educate parents/guardians of children participating in the Programme about influenza and the role of immunization.

For children aged 6 to 23 months, only injectable vaccination will be possible, while from 24 months to 5 years it will be possible to administer the vaccine in the form of a nasal spray. In case of contraindications to the intranasal vaccine or in case it is not available in given age group, a quadrivalent injectable vaccine will be used.

It is important to remember that vaccination is the primary method of prevention. Influenza vaccination does not provide 100% protection against the disease (the effectiveness depends on the season and the health of the patient), so it does not exempt from following the general rules of hygiene outlined below.

- Hand hygiene – during the flu season, and especially when in close contact with an infected person (e.g. at home, work, hospital, clinic). Frequent hand washing with soap and water (preferably with an alcohol-based product) is essential: after every contact with the sick person, after using the toilet, before eating or touching the mouth and nose, upon returning home, after blowing the nose, or covering the mouth when sneezing and coughing.
- Wearing a face mask (e.g., surgical, dental) in close contact situations with a sick person (up to 1.5-2 m) – wearing a mask at all times when in close contact with a flu patient indoors (e.g., at home, in a hospital or clinic) reduces the risk of contracting the disease. The mask should also be worn by the flu patient to reduce the risk of infecting others. If a member of the household becomes ill, wearing a mask at home and performing strict hand hygiene by everyone in the household for 7 days can reduce the risk of infection.
- Other hygiene rules for the flu epidemic season: you should cover your mouth with a disposable handkerchief when coughing and sneezing, then throw it in the trash and wash your hands thoroughly.

- Isolation of sick persons for 7 days after the onset of symptoms or, if they last longer, 24 hours after the fever and acute respiratory symptoms have subsided.

Medical experts recommend vaccinations for children

"Regularly vaccinated people are less likely to become infected"

Prof. Adam Antczak MD PhD answers our questions

- Pulmonology specialist, Head of the General and Oncological Pulmonology Clinic of the Medical University in Łódź, Chairman of the Scientific Board of the National Influenza Programme.

The Municipality of Krakow has been implementing vaccinations against influenza for many years. We know that similar preventive programs are implemented throughout Europe.

Adam Antczak: Many developed countries in the world have flu vaccination policies. The most developed policy is that of the United Kingdom, where children and adults are vaccinated against influenza en masse. The same is true in Scandinavian countries, southern Europe, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Germany. These are countries with a very high vaccination culture. COVID-19 has caused interest in flu vaccination to increase worldwide by more than 100 percent. Poland still compares very modestly with the rest of Europe. However, more and more Poles are being vaccinated against influenza every year. Vaccination programs are most often implemented by local government units. I assess them positively.

Where did the confidence of European societies in flu vaccines come from?

AA: Flu vaccines have a 90-year-long history! The first vaccine was produced in 1932. Since the post-war years, there has been mass vaccination in the developed countries of the world. Flu vaccines were invented because, at the time, the 1918 influenza pandemic and the millions or tens of millions of victims were well remembered. The pandemic of a century ago was much more terrible than COVID. That is when people started thinking about vaccination. The flu vaccine represents a very long history of vaccinations being continuously improved. This constitutes for billions of doses of this vaccine administered.

What is the effectiveness of the influenza vaccine? Is it possible to get sick again after being vaccinated?

AA: We have two concepts of efficacy. The first relates to the response of a particular organism. When it comes to young people, the effectiveness is very high, because it reaches 80-90%, that is, about 90% of young people have the desired antibody titres. There is also clinical efficacy, that is, when we get vaccinated, we will not get sick, we will be protected from the disease or its consequences. And here the effectiveness of the vaccine is also very high. Some people who have been vaccinated will not get sick. However, even with

vaccination, you can get sick. Vaccination does not protect us from infection, but it protects us from severe disease and complications.

When is the best time to get a flu vaccination?

AA: We count the influenza season from mid-September to mid-April, but the peak incidence is in January, February and March. If we administer the vaccine in November or December, this is the ideal time, due to the fact that the peak of the vaccine's effect will be during the peak of flu cases. We encourage vaccination until the end of the year.

Let's talk about vaccinating children. How old should the kids be to start vaccinating them?

AA: The 6th month of life is the time when the child finishes using the immunity it gained from its mother. Six months is a kind of reservoir that the child receives from the mother, through the placenta. After that, the toddler's immunity needs to be stimulated. Especially since six-month-olds are the most vulnerable to severe infection. It is worth vaccinating from the age of 6 months.

Does vaccinating children carry any risks?

AA: This is such a safe vaccination that it is hard to consider the worst. Adverse events after vaccination can occur, of course. They mainly involve fever, in a young child it is mostly fever, rarely with shivering. But this happens very infrequently and antipyretics are enough to deal with it. With the vaccines we give, we do not cause severe illness. Injectable vaccines contain viral antigens. Intranasal vaccines contain a weakened, specially engineered virus that provides immunity. We don't have to be afraid of causing illness.

Can children who are afraid of a needle prick be given the vaccine in an alternative nasal spray form?

AA: Yes. This is a very well and carefully studied vaccine. It is reserved for children and adolescents from 3 to 18 years old. The vaccine contains a live virus that does not develop in our lungs, but in the nose. Immunological effectiveness, as well as clinical effectiveness, is very high. A child vaccinated against influenza for the first time should be vaccinated twice, at monthly intervals.

Parents of allergic children wonder if the flu vaccine will be safe for them?

AA: In general, it is safe. What may cause concern is hypersensitivity to egg white. Classic injectable vaccines contain egg white. If your child has a hypersensitivity to this protein, proceed with caution and consult your doctor. However, in the case of other allergies, we not only do not discourage vaccination, but encourage it for a very simple reason. Infections occur very easily in such children. Vaccination has a protective effect against influenza and other infections. Regularly vaccinated people are less likely to become infected.

After receiving the vaccine, symptoms of vaccine adverse reactions may occur. What should be done then?

AA: You should see your primary care physician, and your doctor will implement the current procedures for reporting adverse vaccine reactions.