



Influenza Vaccination (Flu Jab) for Children with Kidney Diseases

For Parents/Guardians

Influenza (otherwise known as the flu) is a contagious viral infection that causes upper or lower respiratory tract (nose, throat or lungs) infections. However, it may also may lead to severe illness requiring hospitalisation, intensive care and/or even death.

Influenza is dangerous for children with underlying chronic medical conditions such as kidney diseases as they are more prone to severe complications. This may include:

- Worsening of underlying kidney disease
- Risk of transplant rejection in transplant recipients
- Higher need for hospitalisation or intensive care
- Higher risk of death

In order to reduce these risks, influenza vaccination is highly recommended.

Which vaccine will be administered?

The most common influenza vaccine in Singapore is the **quadrivalent inactivated influenza vaccine**. “Quadrivalent” refers to the design of the vaccine, which protects against four of the most common influenza strains – two influenza A viruses and two influenza B viruses. The vaccine is commonly administered as an injection into the muscle.

Who can receive the vaccine?

It can be given to any child 6 months old and above.

For children between 6 months to 8 years old, two doses should be administered 4 weeks apart to provide adequate protection for that season, if they are receiving the vaccine for the first time.

For children aged 9 years and above, or those who have already received at least two doses of the vaccine before, one dose is generally sufficient annually. In seasons where there is a rapid change in the type of circulating flu virus, your doctor may recommend a second flu jab after 6 months.

Side effects of influenza vaccination

In general, the influenza vaccine is safe and well-tolerated in all age groups. Common side effects include:

- Soreness, redness or swelling over the injection site
- Low grade fever
- Body ache or headaches

Most of these symptoms usually go away within two to three days. You may give your child paracetamol as prescribed by the doctor to help relieve the discomfort or fever if he/she is not allergic to it. Speak to your doctor if you have any concerns.

Occasionally, patients may experience certain rare side effects such as:

- **Severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis)**

This can happen within minutes to a few hours of the vaccination. Symptoms include:

- Swelling of the lips, eyes, tongue and face
- Difficulty breathing
- Itchy rashes over the body

If your child experiences any of these symptoms, seek medical attention immediately.

- **Guillain-Barre syndrome**

This is a rare condition where the immune system affects the nerves of the body. The overall risk is very low, with one additional case for every one million flu vaccine doses administered.

Contraindications to influenza vaccination

If your child has a history of severe allergic reaction to flu jabs or Guillain-Barre syndrome, please consult your doctor before proceeding with the flu jab.

Note: Egg allergy is not a contraindication for the flu vaccine. If your child has had a previous severe allergic reaction to eggs, discuss this with your doctor. They may advise for the vaccine to be given in a supervised setting with a healthcare provider that can recognise and manage severe allergic reactions.

Useful links

National University Hospital

Influenza in children:

<https://for.sg/nuh-flu>

Health Hub

Influenza Vaccine:

<https://for.sg/flu-vaccine>

Notes:

National University Hospital

5 Lower Kent Ridge Road, Singapore 119074

OneNUHS Hotline: (65) 6908 2222

OneNUHS General Enquiries: contactus@nuhs.edu.sg

OneNUHS Appointments: appointment@nuhs.edu.sg

www.nuh.com.sg

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