

Porcine Gelatine and the Flu Vaccine

The nasal flu vaccine does contain gelatine that comes from pork as one of its additives. Gelatine is commonly used in a range of medicines, including many capsules and some other vaccines. The gelatine used in Fluenz is a highly purified product used to stabilise this live viral vaccine. Very many stabilisers were tried out by the manufacturers and this gelatine was chosen. A change to the stabiliser would require a major programme of additional testing before it could be approved for use in children.

Vaccines are very complex substances that take many years to develop. They are subject to intensive testing to make sure they are both safe and effective before they can be licensed for public use. They contain a wide variety of products all of which are needed to make the vaccine as safe and effective as possible; none of the contents can be replaced without further extensive testing and then resubmission for licensing.

Listing all the contents of a vaccine on the consent form or in the leaflets would be impractical but we recognise that substances derived from pork cause problems for certain Muslim communities so by drawing particular attention to these we hope that all parents are fully aware before they consent.

For more details on the contents of the vaccine the NHS Choices website has a link to the scientific description of the products in Fluenz at

www.nhs.uk/Conditions/vaccinations/Pages/child-flu-vaccine.aspx.

PHE is still recommending the use of Fluenz because, compared with injected, inactivated vaccines, Fluenz:

- is more effective
- provides protection for longer
- may offer protection against slightly different types of flu virus
- is easier to give and more comfortable to have

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PHE would like to inform the Muslim communities of the UK of the issues surrounding the vaccine so that they can make an informed decision about whether or not it is acceptable for their children.

The flu vaccine does not contain any DNA from pigs. Very sensitive scientific tests have shown that the flu vaccine does not contain any detectable DNA from pigs.

The information above has been used from the below documents

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/386842/2902998_PHE_FluPorcine_QAforParents_FINAL_CT.pdf

For more information you can visit

www.departmentofhealth.co.uk
www.nhs.uk/vaccinations

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