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Flu Nasal Spray versus Injection Vaccine for Kids

The Science behind Canada and the U.S.'s Differing Recommendations

There is some confusion about the recommendation in Canada to continue providing the nasal spray (Flumist®) vaccine to children while the U.S. has recommended against its use. How can two countries that share a border have opposite vaccine recommendations?

On Wednesday October 11th, Public Health Ontario presented rounds explaining where the Canadian recommendation got its evidence. In summary, based on Canadian and European data from trials, Flumist® was no less effective than injection vaccine, but it was equivalent.

The American recommendation was largely based on the H1N1 vaccine effectiveness of Flumist® compared to inactivated vaccine. In Canada, UK and Finland, the reduced vaccine effectiveness for the H1N1 strain was not seen.

The difference in recommendation has left some parents confused and more hesitant about the flu vaccine. Parents should be reminded that it is actually a sign that vaccine surveillance is working. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) has previously given the nasal spray vaccine a preferential recommendation for young children, which has changed. Recommendations are refined as new data becomes available.

The recommendation from Canada is that the nasal spray or injection vaccines are equivalent. Either can be used in children 2 to 17 years of age as long as no contraindications exist.

For More Information:

Public Health Ontario Grand Rounds on Influenza and the Influenza Vaccine Update. The slides and audio are available [here](#).

[Ontario's Influenza Program](#)