

The [new study](#) looked back at data from 2013 to 2017, comparing rates of group A strep (GAS) infections in pilot areas and comparing them to other areas where the vaccine was not being offered as widely. The study found that incidence of GAS was lower in pilot areas where the LAIV vaccine was being offered to all primary school children, compared to areas where it was being incrementally rolled out.

In 2 to 4 year olds, rates of GAS were 73.5 per 100,000 children in pilot areas, compared to 93 per 100,000 children in non-pilot areas.

In 5 to 10 year olds, rates of GAS were 50.3 per 100,000 children in pilot areas, compared to 57.8 per 100,000 in non-pilot areas.

There was no difference in scarlet fever or invasive group A strep (iGAS) notifications.

Dr Jamie Lopez Bernal, Consultant Epidemiologist for Immunisation and Countermeasures at UKHSA, said:

Our findings suggest that the nasal spray vaccine programme, which offers very good protection against flu, may also help contribute to reductions in the rates of GAS infections among children.

Children who catch influenza are at greater risk from subsequent infections, including group A strep, so these findings provide yet more reasons for parents of eligible children to bring them forward for the flu vaccine. This is particularly important at this time when we are seeing unusually high rates of group A strep infection across the population.