

CHILD FLU VACCINE CONTAINS MERCURY



Flu jab: Up to a million children have been given vaccines containing mercury

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By Lucy Johnston, Health Editor

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UP to a million under-fives have been inoculated against the flu virus with a controversial vaccine containing poisonous mercury.

Pandemrix has been given to almost a quarter of all healthy babies and young children as well as thousands of older children with health problems.

Inquiries by the Sunday Express reveal it contains a preservative made with a form of mercury that was phased out of

childhood vaccines in 2004 after fears about its safety.

The preservative, called thimerosal, has been linked with autism and developmental disorders in children and was withdrawn from childhood vaccines in the United States and parts of Europe 10 years ago.

Yet the UK government has always insisted there is no persuasive evidence it poses a health risk. When it was withdrawn, Labour health minister Rosie Winterton said the move was part of "a global goal to minimise environmental exposure to mercury".

However, many experts disagree. Dr Richard Halvorsen, author of the book, *The Truth About Vaccines*, said: "Thimerosal is an extremely toxic substance and known poison to the brain.

"There is enough convincing evidence linking thimerosal with developmental disorders and learning problems in individual children to warrant its removal from any childhood vaccine.

"It is irresponsible to administer a jab with little proven benefit which contains potentially harmful toxic substances."

Jackie Fletcher, of support group Jabs, which backs parents who fear vaccines have harmed their children, said: "Thimerosal was removed from childhood vaccines, now they are readministering it. This is worrying."

Pandemrix also contains a substance called squalene used to boost the immune response to the jab. It has been linked with adverse reactions including nerve problems and Gulf War syndrome.

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There are many versions of the flu jab, most without thimerosal or squalene yet 86 per cent of the 3,310 reports of suspected side effects to all flu vaccines, including 29 deaths, have been linked to Pandemrix.

Department of Health figures show that last winter just under a quarter of children aged between six months and four years were given Pandemrix during the winter flu campaign. Last week doctors were told to give this version of the vaccine to vulnerable children if they could not obtain the routine seasonal flu jab, which has run out in some areas.

US health authorities ordered the removal of mercury from childhood vaccines in 1999. There are still 5,000 legal claims relating to autism waiting to be heard.

However, both the Medicines Healthcare Regulatory Agency and the Department of Health insist there is no evidence of harm from vaccines containing thimerosal.

A spokeswoman from the MHRA said: "The only exception is of possible mild allergic reaction, such as a rash or swelling at the site of injection. Extensive studies have failed to find any evidence that these low levels of thimerosal carry any risk of neurotoxicity."

Pressed about health warnings on its information leaflet, a spokesman for Glaxo Smith Kline, which manufactures the jab, would only refer to his original statement which said: "This vaccine has been through a rigorous approval process which has established it is both efficacious and safe. It has been administered to millions of people across the world and there is an extensive database in people of all ages demonstrating safety and efficacy. Thimerosal plays an important role in preventing bacterial contamination. Regulators across the world have concluded there is no evidence the level of thimerosal in vaccines poses a health risk."