

particularly vulnerable. The job is not suitable for children under 6 months, as they don't develop an immunity from it.

WHAT ARE THE CONCERNS?

Some parents feel the vaccine was rushed out as a reaction to the pandemic threat, and so hasn't been tested thoroughly enough. There's also concern about its side effects. Those who've had the jab describe symptoms ranging from a sore arm, to acute aches and pains.

There's also a perception that the worst is over, and that vaccinating our children now is exposing them to unnecessary risk. However, the World Health Organisation recently warned of more cases after the Summer.

CAN CHILDREN WITH AN EGG ALLERGY HAVE THE JOB?

The general Swine Flu vaccine is called Pandemrix and is grown on eggs, so isn't suitable for those with an egg allergy. Instead you can ask for Celvapan. Both offer immunity, but children will need TWO doses of the Celvapan, while those able to have Pandemrix only need ONE dose.

A PARENT FOR ...

Alison Talboys lives locally, is mum to Ben (3½ years old) and is also a GP.*

"There are risks attached to every decision in life. As a parent I feel obliged to offer my child the best protection and the patients I treat are offered this opportunity too. I am aware of the mixed messages and playground chat that's often against immunization. But I am also aware of the risks of infectious disease, and the side effects of the anti-viral medication that may be offered if my child did become seriously unwell.

"The three main reasons that influenced my decision are:

1. Pandemrix is thought to be a very safe vaccination. 24 Million doses have been given in Europe and the majority of adverse reactions have been mild and short lived.
2. H1N1 could be the predominant flu virus in the 2010 flu season so immunizing now may protect for next winter too.
3. There is also the risk that if we reach the next stage of the pandemic, we may experience more cases of serious illness."

... AND ONE AGAINST

David Richardson, a local father who works as a sound engineer, has a six month old baby and a three year old and has followed the debate with interest.*

"My wife and I have researched the subject of vaccination in detail and we have chosen not to vaccinate our children; we will not be giving either of our children the swine flu jab.

"I am worried about the long term effects of Pandemrix and don't want to risk it being tested out on my children. Many leading health professionals around the world have voiced concerns about the vaccine.

"I am also concerned about the amount of money pharmaceutical companies have made from a predicted flu pandemic that didn't actually happen. Governments have spent billions on a vaccine and now I believe they have a surplus that they are trying to use up."

WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION?

Take a look at www.direct.gov.uk/swineflu

JOIN THE DEBATE...

What will you be doing? Take part in our Families Magazines Group forum, and see what other parents think. If you've already made your decision, share your experience with parents who haven't yet made up their minds. Go to www.familiesonline.co.uk/swineflu

**Names changed to protect privacy.*

It's never too late to get fit ...



Personal trainer Sue Kitson has come up with the perfect solution for anyone who is 'gym phobic' or nervous about starting a fitness regime. She has set up women-only training sessions in a private gym which cater for all levels of fitness. She has set up the sessions so that a complete novice or someone very fit can take part.

When she invited me to try a class I was pleasantly surprised. I hadn't used a gym for a while and felt extremely rusty. As a group we had to work our way

round the gym doing a circuit of cardio, weights, sit-ups and various other exercises. It was hard work but her instructions were clear and easy to follow. It was much more fun working out in a group and it has also inspired me to start exercising regularly again.

Sue was not always a fan of exercise herself; she hated P.E. at school but transformed her life by training to be a personal trainer in her mid-forties and has never looked back.

But she does remember how hard she initially found it. "To this day I've never forgotten how I felt the first time I set foot in a gym. I felt really self-conscious and had very little confidence. I felt like everyone was looking at me".

Sue realised that many other women must feel the same way, which is why she set up her classes. "They provide the opportunity to be encouraged, supported and motivated in all areas of exercise in a private gym where no-one is watching. It gives me the greatest of pleasure to see my clients grow in confidence and knowledge, whilst also achieving a greater level of fitness without feeling intimidated."

The women-only sessions are held at the gym in Braywick Park, Maidenhead on weekday and Saturday mornings. For more information about the classes or personal training, call Sue on 07800 571 791 or e-mail her at sue.kitson@gmail.com.

www.suekitson.com

Claire Winter, Editor