

Shots only option for kids to prevent flu

By Associated Press

Kids may get more of a sting from flu vaccination this fall: Doctors are gearing up to give shots only, because U.S. health officials say the easy-to-use nasal spray version of the vaccine isn't working as well as a jab.

Needle-phobic adults still have some less painful options. But FluMist, with its squirt into each nostril, was the only non-injected alternative for children, and has accounted for about a third of pediatric flu vaccinations in recent years.

The problem: Studies from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found in the past few years, FluMist hasn't protected against certain influenza strains as well as regular flu shots. Baffled scientists can't explain why.

The CDC says FluMist should not be used in the U.S. this year. Last week the American Academy of Pediatrics agreed and urged youngsters to roll up their sleeves for a shot.

"We're saying, 'Shoot, now we've got to do the poke again'," said Wendy Sue Swanson, a doctor at Seattle Children's Hospital and the AAP. But, "we know the flu vaccine is the best shot at prevention and protecting those who are vulnerable from serious and even life-threatening infections from influenza."

Swanson has tricks to help ease tears and anxiety, like numbing the skin or distraction techniques like telling the youngster to cough on the count of three, coinciding with the poke. Sometimes the youngest feel braver by going first to show up older siblings. Swanson makes her own vaccination a family affair, parents and kids getting the shot together.

But her top advice: Parents, don't lie and tell your kids the shot won't hurt. Instead, tell them "it might hurt a bit but it doesn't last long and you can do this."