

HELSINGIN SANOMAT

INTERNATIONAL EDITION - HOME

You arrived here at 06:15 Helsinki time Friday 27.8.2010

[HOME](#)

[ARCHIVE](#)

[ABOUT](#)

[SUOMEKSI -
IN FINNISH](#)

H1N1 vaccinations suspended over narcolepsy scare

At least 15 cases of narcolepsy among children and young people in past six months

The possibility of compensations for children and young people diagnosed with narcolepsy recently is to be assessed later if a link

between the disease and the swine flu vaccine is established, says Minister of Social Services **Paula Risikko** (Nat. Coalition Party).

“The matter must be evaluated when all studies have been made. Experts insist that if the illnesses and the vaccinations have a connection, we will find out.”

“I understand the pain of the families and the seriousness of the situation, but it is too early to take a stand on who has responsibility to compensate.”

The National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) decided on Tuesday to recommend that vaccinations against swine flu with the *Pandemix* vaccine should be suspended until it is established whether or not the vaccine is the cause of the surge in cases of narcolepsy among children and young people.

By Tuesday, 15 new cases of the disease, which causes the sufferer to suddenly fall asleep without warning, had been diagnosed among children aged 5 to 16 since December. There is a clear time correlation between the cases and the swine flu vaccinations.

In addition to the confirmed cases, there are some where the disease is suspected are being studied.

Normally about six cases of narcolepsy among children and young people are diagnosed each year in Finland.

An unusually large number of patients



print this

25.8.2010 - TODAY

- ▶ [H1N1 vaccinations suspended over narcolepsy scare](#)
- ▶ [Teaching of Russian is increasing in schools in Eastern Finland](#)
- ▶ [Use of cannabis increases among young Finns](#)
- ▶ [Security Police getting more money for Africa operation](#)
- ▶ [Finnish peacekeeper accidentally wounded on base in Afghanistan](#)
- ▶ [Prime Minister Kiviniemi: EU should reject preaching over human rights](#)
- ▶ [Somali immigrants in Finland agonising over events in their former home country](#)
- ▶ [Nokia and Intel to develop next-generation user interface in Oulu](#)

have also been diagnosed with narcolepsy in Sweden after vaccinations for swine flu had been administered. There is no information of new cases in other countries.

Suspending the vaccinations is a precaution, says **Pekka Puska**, director-general of THL. He says that the suspension will continue until the matter has been sufficiently investigated.

Risikko is confident that health care officials and vaccine experts will be able to determine if it will be possible to administer vaccines against swine flu alongside the regular seasonal flu shots.

She herself is confident that the vaccines are safe. “When a pandemic is happening, fast decisions must be made. In a pandemic situation, it is never possible to undertake lengthy research, because this would require thousands of tests, and the examination of thousands of test subjects.”

THL emphasises that there can be many reasons behind the increase in narcolepsy: the swine flu, the vaccine, or an interaction of the vaccine and an infection.

Marjo Renko, chairwoman of the national group of experts on vaccines, said in a television news interview on Tuesday that the a substance contained in the vaccine is suspected as a possible cause of the narcolepsy. Later Renko said that the matter was out of context. “There is no proof that the increase in narcolepsy would be linked with the vaccines. We do not suspect anything. This is mere speculation.”

Previously in HS International Edition:

▶ [Finland still has millions of doses of swine flu vaccine \(16.8.2010\)](#)

▶ [Health officials say WHO pandemic pronouncement does not alter Finland’s preparations for swine flu \(12.6.2009\)](#)

▶ [Swine flu shots found to cause mild symptoms of disease \(22.10.2009\)](#)

Helsingin Sanomat

[Back to Top ^](#)