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**Themes:** Home From Hospital, Public Sector Services

**Aimed at:** All People

Flu vaccine

The flu vaccine is a safe and effective vaccine. It's offered every year on the NHS to help protect people at risk of getting seriously ill from flu.

This page is about the flu vaccine for adults.

Find out about the children's flu vaccine

The best time to have the flu vaccine is in the autumn or early winter before flu starts spreading. But you can get the vaccine later.

Flu vaccine and coronavirus (COVID-19)

Flu vaccination is important because:

more people are likely to get flu this winter as fewer people will have built up natural immunity to it during the COVID-19 pandemic

if you get flu and COVID-19 at the same time, research shows you're more likely to be seriously ill

getting vaccinated against flu and COVID-19 will provide protection for you and those around you for both these serious illnesses

If you've had COVID-19, it's safe to have the flu vaccine. It will still be effective at helping to prevent flu.

## COVID-19 booster vaccine

Some people may be eligible for both the flu and the COVID-19 booster vaccines.

If you are offered both vaccines, it's safe to have them at the same time.

Find out more about the COVID-19 booster vaccine and who can get it

## Who can have the flu vaccine?

The flu vaccine is given free on the NHS to people who:

are 50 and over (including those who'll be 50 by 31 March 2022)

have certain health conditions

are pregnant

are in long-stay residential care

receive a carer's allowance, or are the main carer for an older or disabled person

who may be at risk if you get sick

live with someone who is more likely to get infections (such as someone who has HIV, has had a transplant or is having certain treatments for cancer, lupus or rheumatoid arthritis)

frontline health or social care workers

## Where to get the flu vaccine

You can have the NHS flu vaccine at:

your GP surgery

a pharmacy offering the service

your midwifery service if you're pregnant

a hospital appointment

If you do not have your flu vaccine at your GP surgery, you do not have to tell the surgery. This will be done for you.

## Find a pharmacy that offers the NHS flu vaccine

### Important

It's important to go to your vaccination appointments unless you have symptoms of COVID-19.

## Flu vaccine for people with long-term health conditions

The flu vaccine is offered free on the NHS to anyone with a serious long-term health condition, including:

respiratory conditions, such as asthma (needing steroid inhaler or tablets), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), including emphysema and

bronchitis

diabetes

heart conditions, such as coronary heart disease or heart failure

being very overweight – a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or above

chronic kidney disease

liver disease, such as hepatitis

neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease,

multiple sclerosis (MS), or cerebral palsy

a learning disability

problems with your spleen, for example, sickle cell disease, or if you have had your spleen removed

a weakened immune system as the result of conditions such as HIV and AIDS, or taking medicines such as steroid tablets or chemotherapy

Talk to your doctor if you have a long-term condition that is not in one of these groups. They should offer you the flu vaccine if they think you're at risk of serious problems if you get flu.

Flu vaccine if you're pregnant

You should have the flu vaccine if you're pregnant to help protect you and your baby.

It's safe to have the flu vaccine at any stage of pregnancy.

Find out more about the flu vaccine in pregnancy

Flu vaccine for frontline health and social care workers

If you're a frontline health and social care worker, your employer should offer you a flu vaccine. They may give the vaccine at your workplace.

You can also have an NHS flu vaccine at a GP surgery or a pharmacy, if you're a health or social care worker employed by a:

registered residential care or nursing home

registered homecare organisation

hospice

You can also have the flu vaccine if you provide health or social care through direct payments or personal health budgets, or both.

Who should not have the flu vaccine

Most adults can have the flu vaccine, but you should avoid it if you have had a serious allergic reaction to a flu vaccine in the past.

You may be at risk of an allergic reaction to the flu vaccine injection if you have an egg allergy. This is because some flu vaccines are made using eggs.

Ask a GP or pharmacist for a low-egg or egg-free vaccine.

If you're ill with a high temperature, it's best to wait until you're better before having the flu vaccine.

How effective is the flu vaccine?

The flu vaccine gives the best protection against flu.

Flu vaccines help protect against the main types of flu viruses, although there's still a chance you might get flu.

If you do get flu after vaccination, it's likely to be milder and not last as long.

Having the flu vaccine will also stop you spreading flu to other people who may be more at risk of serious problems from flu.

It can take 10 to 14 days for the flu vaccine to work.

Flu vaccine side effects

Flu vaccines are very safe. All adult flu vaccines are given by injection into the muscle of the upper arm.

Most side effects are mild and only last for a day or so, such as:

slightly raised temperature

muscle aches

sore arm where the needle went in – this is more likely to happen with the vaccine for people aged 65 and over

Try these tips to help reduce the discomfort:

continue to move your arm regularly

take a painkiller, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen – some people, including those who are pregnant, should not take ibuprofen unless a doctor recommends it

Allergic reactions to the flu vaccine

It's very rare for anyone to have a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to the flu vaccine. If this does happen, it usually happens within minutes.

The person who vaccinates you will be trained to deal with allergic reactions and treat them immediately.

Information:

Report a side effect

Anyone can report a suspected side effect of a vaccine through the Yellow Card Scheme.

Flu vaccine ingredients

There are several types of injected flu vaccine. None of them contain live viruses so they cannot give you flu.

If you're eligible for the flu vaccine on the NHS, you'll be offered one that's most effective for you, depending on your age:

adults aged 18 to 64 – there are different types, including low-egg and egg-free ones

adults aged 65 and over – the most common one contains an extra ingredient to help your immune system make a stronger response to the vaccine

Children aged between 6 months and 2 years who have a long-term health condition are offered an approved injected flu vaccine instead of the nasal spray vaccine.

Find out about the children's nasal spray flu vaccine

Talk to a GP, practice nurse or pharmacist for more information about these vaccines.

Information:

Read more about why vaccines are safe and important, including how they work and what they contain.

More information and other formats

GOV.UK: flu vaccination: who should have it this winter and why (including how to request an accessible version)

GOV.UK: flu vaccination easy read guides

Information:

Vaccination in other parts of the UK

NHS Inform: flu vaccination in Scotland

Public Health Wales: flu vaccination in Wales

nidirect: flu vaccination in Northern Ireland

**Area:** Bassetlaw, Bolsover

## **Contact Details**

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/flu-influenza-vaccine/>

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