

### Is there anybody who should not be vaccinated?

Almost everybody can have the vaccine, but you should not be vaccinated if you have ever had a serious allergy to the vaccine, or any of its ingredients. If you have had a severe allergic reaction to hens' eggs or have a condition that weakens your immune system, you may not be able to have certain types of flu vaccine – check with your GP.

### Can the flu vaccine give you flu?

No. The vaccine cannot cause flu. Although a few people may feel slightly unwell after getting the flu vaccine this does not mean that they have got flu.

### Does the vaccine have side effects?

Flu vaccinations are very safe. You may get some soreness where the vaccine was injected. Less often, people get a slight temperature and aching muscles for a couple of days after being vaccinated. Other reactions are very rare.

### How does the vaccine work?

About a week to 10 days after you get the flu vaccine, your body makes antibodies to the vaccine viruses. These antibodies help to protect you against any similar viruses you then come into contact with.

### How effective is it?

Flu vaccinations only protect against flu. There are many other viruses around every winter which cause flu-like symptoms, but these are usually not as serious as flu. A small number of people may get flu even if they have been vaccinated, but it is likely to be a milder dose than if they had not been vaccinated.

### When is the best time to be vaccinated for flu?

It is important that you get your flu vaccination in October or November to be ready to fight off infection. You need to get a new dose of the vaccine each year, as protection doesn't last from one year to the next. The new vaccine, available in the autumn, protects against different strains of flu, so even if you were vaccinated as late as April 2017 you still need the new vaccine.

### How do I get the vaccine?

Simply contact your GP surgery and the receptionist will be able to tell you the arrangements for flu vaccination in your practice.

For more information about the flu vaccine talk to your GP, practice nurse, district nurse or pharmacist, or visit:

[www.publichealth.hscni.net](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net)  
[www.fluawareni.info](http://www.fluawareni.info)  
[www.nidirect.gov.uk/stay-well](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/stay-well)

Translations in a range of regional and minority ethnic languages are available. For further details visit [www.publichealth.hscni.net](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net) or [www.fluawareni.info](http://www.fluawareni.info)



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# Flu is more serious than you think

## Get the vaccine now



Each year the flu vaccine protects against the most common strains of flu likely to be circulating.

This leaflet highlights why it is important to get the flu vaccine.

### What is flu?

Flu occurs every year, usually in the winter. It is a highly infectious disease caused by a virus. Symptoms include fever, chills, headache, aching muscles, cough and sore throat – and because flu is a virus, antibiotics won't help. People sometimes call a bad cold the flu, but really, having flu is much worse.

### What harm can flu do?

At best it is a nasty experience, even for people who are usually fit and healthy. However, it can lead to more serious illnesses such as bronchitis and pneumonia, or can make existing conditions worse. In the worst cases, flu can result in a stay in hospital or even death.

Flu infection during pregnancy can have serious consequences for both mother and baby. For further information see the leaflet *Get the flu vaccine to protect yourself and your baby*

### Who should get the flu vaccine?

The following are at greater risk from the effects of flu and should get the vaccine:

- **Pregnant women.**
- **Anyone aged 65 or over, even if they feel fit and healthy at the moment.**
- **Children and adults who have any of the following medical conditions:**
  - a chronic chest condition such as asthma;
  - a chronic heart condition;
  - chronic liver disease;
  - chronic kidney disease;
  - diabetes;
  - lowered immunity due to disease or treatment such as steroids or cancer therapy (people living in the same house as someone with lowered immunity may also need to be vaccinated);
  - a chronic neurological condition, such as stroke, multiple sclerosis or a condition that affects your nervous system, such as cerebral palsy;
  - are seriously overweight (BMI>40);
  - any other serious medical condition – check with your doctor if you are unsure.
- **Children who have previously been admitted to hospital with a chest infection.**
- **Children attending schools for children with severe learning difficulties.**
- **Anyone living in a residential or nursing home.**

- **Main carers for elderly or disabled people.**
  - you should seek advice from your GP surgery as to whether you should be vaccinated so you can continue to look after the person you care for. You should also ensure that they are vaccinated (if recommended).

### Vaccination for children with medical conditions

Most children aged 2 to 17 years will be offered a vaccine that is given as a spray into the nose. This vaccine has been used for four years in the UK. It has been shown to be effective in children and to have a very good safety record. A few children cannot receive this vaccine and will be offered the injected vaccine instead.

### Is the vaccine safe for pregnant women?

Yes. Pregnant women should get the vaccine regardless of their stage of pregnancy. They will be offered it by their GP.

The flu vaccine is licensed for use in pregnancy by the European Medicines Agency. It has been regularly used for pregnant women in other countries. Millions of pregnant women have received the flu vaccine in the USA, where its safety has been carefully monitored. This has shown the vaccine to be safe for pregnant women and their babies.