

# Introduction

Vaccinations are one of the most effective ways to save lives and improve health, second only to clean water.

Northern Ireland offers a comprehensive vaccination programme, free for eligible individuals based on age or risk group, to protect against serious diseases.

Historically, Northern Ireland has achieved some of the highest immunisation uptake rates globally, thanks to the dedication of healthcare professionals. Maintaining this success is essential to reduce the spread of infectious diseases and safeguard public health.

## How vaccination programmes work

The [Department of Health](#) selects vaccination programmes based on expert advice, and delivery involves collaboration between healthcare providers, public health experts, and other organisations. These include government departments, public health experts, academic researchers, commissioners, pharmacists, school health teams, health visitors and GPs.

### Programme types:

- Universal - offered to everyone (e.g., school-based programmes)
- Targeted - for those at higher risk (e.g., pregnancy, or elderly programmes)

Examples include:

- Preschool vaccine programmes
- School based vaccine programmes
- Pregnancy vaccine programmes
- Elderly vaccine programmes
- Targeted programmes for adults and children
- Health and Social Care Occupational Health vaccine programmes

### Key programme: Influenza (flu)

The [Influenza \(flu\) vaccine programme](#) is the largest, most comprehensive programme, running from October to March for:

- Children
- Adults
- Health and social care workers

## **Vaccine management system (VMS)**

The [Vaccine Management System \(VMS\)](#) is a Northern Ireland's system for managing vaccinations. It enables:

- Recording of vaccines by healthcare professional
- Data analysis to monitor coverage
- Online appointment booking for citizens

## **Travel vaccines**

For travel health advice and vaccines, visit:

- National Travel Health Network and Centre ([NaTHNaC](#)),
- [TRAVAX](#)
- [PHA's travel advice page](#)

## **Ongoing work**

### **Key areas of ongoing work**

- Leading and coordinating vaccine programmes
- Planning and introduction of new vaccine programmes
- Providing training resources for those delivering vaccine programmes
- Providing expert immunisation advice
- Monitoring uptake and vaccine preventable disease surveillance
- Working with the public to understand their views on vaccines
- Working closely with organisations to maintain and improve high uptake, particularly targeting groups who may have lower uptake

- Responding to cases of vaccine preventable diseases
- Maintaining and improving high uptake of the childhood vaccines particularly targeting areas / groups with comparatively low uptake
- Building on recently introduced HPV vaccine programme
- Screening health care workers for measles immunity and vaccinating those not immune
- Providing advice to health professionals through the duty room

## **Key resources**

### **Infectious diseases:**

- [Measles](#)
- [Meningococcal disease](#)
- [Pertussis](#)
- [Rubella](#)
- [Pneumococcal disease](#)
- [HIB](#)

### **Influenza:**

- [Health professionals](#)
- [General public](#)
- [General vaccination](#)
- [Green Book](#)

### **Travel vaccines sites:**

- [NaTHNaC](#)
- [Travax](#)

### **Other Resources:**

- [Vaccine Management System \(VMS\)](#)
- [PHA immunisation training slides](#) - Access for healthcare professionals only
- [Immunisation leaflets \(Northern Ireland\)](#)
- [Vaccination surveillance data](#)
- [NOIDS surveillance data](#)

## [MMR catch-up campaign 2024](#)

First and second doses of the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine are being offered until 31 March 2024 to anyone aged between 12 months and 25 years who missed getting the vaccines first time around.

Find out more at [www.nidirect.gov.uk/mmr](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/mmr)



After clean water, vaccination is the most effective public health intervention in the world for saving lives and promoting good health.

The childhood vaccination programme has been a tremendous success in Northern Ireland over recent years. Our uptake rates are at an all-time high and Northern Ireland has uptake rates well above the UK average.

This is a tremendous tribute to GPs and all their staff, health visitors and everyone else involved in the vaccination programme who have worked so hard to achieve this.

The seasonal flu vaccine programme is also very successful, with Northern Ireland achieving the highest uptake in the UK.

The areas covered by the vaccination team include childhood vaccines, influenza vaccines, travel vaccines, occupational health vaccines, and the surveillance and control of vaccine preventable diseases.

## **[HPV vaccination for gay and bisexual men \(GBMSM\)](#)**

The human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is offered to all eligible gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM) attending GUM and/or HIV clinics across Northern Ireland. Most of the clinics began offering the HPV vaccine during October 2016 and all clinics have been offering the vaccine since January 2017.

This is in line with advice from the [Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation \(JCVI\)](#), which recommends a targeted vaccination programme for GBMSM aged up to 45 who attend GUM and HIV clinics.

Studies have shown that GBMSM aged up to 45 years who attend GUM or HIV clinics are at greater risk of HPV-associated cancers and genital warts. The HPV vaccine helps prevent infection that can cause genital warts and HPV-associated cancers. Vaccination is especially important for GBMSM who have multiple sexual partners.

[Download the information leaflet here.](#)

## **[Vaccination coverage reports](#)**

# **Statistics on uptake of vaccine programmes**

## **Annual immunisation report**

The PHA Immunisation Team publishes the [Annual Immunisation Report](#) at the end of each calendar year. This provides information on vaccine uptake across:

- Preschool immunisation programmes,
- School-based immunisation programmes,
- Adult immunisation programmes in Northern Ireland.

## **Quarterly coverage reports**

[Quartely reports on vaccine coverage](#) are also available for:

- Preschool vaccine programmes,
- School based vaccine programmes,
- Pregnancy vaccine programmes,
- Elderly vaccine programmes.

## **Statistics on burden of vaccine-preventable diseases**

The [Annual Epidemiology of Vaccine-Preventable Disease Report](#) for the latest calendar year in the first quarter of the following year. This provides information on the burden of vaccine-preventable diseases in Northern Ireland.

Annual immunisation and vaccine-preventable disease reports: [view reports here](#)

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