

FLU VACCINE INFORMATION 2018

In the UK the flu vaccine is available each year from late September or early October onwards. It is recommended to get the flu vaccine in the autumn, before outbreaks of flu have started. It takes up to two weeks after vaccination for you to be protected against flu.

The flu vaccine does not contain any live flu viruses and cannot give you flu.

The FLU JAB

A flu vaccine is available free on the NHS for:

- anyone over the age of 65
- pregnant women
- children and adults with an underlying health condition (particularly long-term heart or respiratory disease)
- children and adults with weakened immune systems

It is given as an annual injection to:

- adults over the age of 18 at risk of flu (including everyone over 65)
- children aged six months to two years at risk of flu

The flu vaccine is also given as an annual nasal spray to:

- children aged two to 18 years at risk of flu
- healthy children aged two and three years old

Do I need the flu jab every year?

Yes. If you're in a high-risk group, you should have the seasonal flu vaccination every year so that you stay protected.

The viruses that cause flu change every year, so this winter's flu will be different from last winter's.

Who should have the vaccine?

<p>The adjuvanted trivalent flu vaccine (aTIV) is recommended for everyone aged 65 and over.</p>	<p>The Quadrivalent flu vaccine (QIV) is recommended for everyone from 6 months to 64 years in these groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> People with a certain medical condition (see list below) People with learning disabilities People living in a residential or nursing home & Carers of people at risk of complications of the flu Pregnant women Household contacts of people who are immunocompromised Frontline health and social care workers Children aged from 6 months to 2 years (i.e. too young for the nasal flu vaccine) who are at risk from complications of flu Children aged from 2 to 17 years who are at risk from complications of flu and cannot have the nasal flu vaccine 	<p>Flu vaccines are recommended for people of all ages with some health conditions who are at greater risk of serious complications of flu. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respiratory (lung) diseases, including asthma, heart disease, kidney disease or liver disease Neurological (brain or nerve) conditions including learning disability Diabetes A severely weakened immune system (immunosuppression), a missing spleen, sickle cell anaemia or coeliac disease Being seriously overweight (BMI of 40 and above) <p>Your doctor may recommend the flu vaccine in other circumstances as well</p>	<p>At Risk Groups</p> <p>Those in the flu At Risk group are:</p> <p>Over 65s, those with a chronic disease e.g. if you have Diabetes, Asthma (if on inhaled steroids), chronic bronchitis, COPD, chronic kidney disease, liver disease or are on specific drugs that cause your immune system to be suppressed and registered carers. Pregnant ladies are also at risk and are recommended to have a flu vaccination. Please discuss with the midwife if you need further information.</p> <p>As in previous years, healthy 2 and 3 year olds will be offered an influenza vaccination by way of nasal inhalation (no injection required) and we would encourage parents of children in these age ranges to bring them along to the baby immunisation clinic on a Tuesday or make an appointment with the nurse so they can be immunised. Children already in an At Risk group will be vaccinated as usual.</p>
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WHAT IS FLU?

Flu is an infectious and common viral illness spread by coughs and sneezes.

It's not the same as the common cold. Flu is caused by a different group of viruses. Symptoms tend to be more severe and last longer.

You can catch flu – short for influenza – all year round, but it is especially common in winter, which is why it is also known as "seasonal flu".

Flu causes a sudden high temperature, headache and general aches and pains, tiredness and a sore throat. You can also lose your appetite, feel nauseous and have a cough.

Flu symptoms can make you feel so exhausted and unwell that you have to stay in bed and rest until you feel better.

WHEN TO SEE A DOCTOR

If you are otherwise fit and healthy, there is usually no need to see a doctor if you have flu-like symptoms.

The best remedy is to rest at home, keep warm and drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration.

You can take paracetamol or ibuprofen to lower a high temperature and relieve aches.

You should see a doctor if you have flu-like symptoms and you:

- are aged 65 or over
- are pregnant
- have a long-term medical condition such as diabetes, heart disease, lung disease, kidney disease or a neurological disease
- have a weakened immune system

This is because flu can be more serious for you, and your doctor may want to prescribe antiviral medication.

Antiviral medicine can lessen the symptoms of flu and shorten its duration, but treatment needs to begin soon after flu symptoms start for it to be effective.

Antibiotics are of no use in the treatment of flu because it is caused by a virus and not by bacteria.

How long does flu last?

If you have flu, you generally start to feel ill within a few days of being infected.

Symptoms peak after two to three days and you should begin to feel much better after a week or so, although you may feel tired for much longer.

You are usually infectious – that is, able to pass flu on to others – a day before your symptoms start and for a further five or six days. Children and people with weaker immune systems, such as cancer patients, may remain infectious for longer.

Elderly people and anyone with certain long-term medical conditions are more likely to have a bad case of flu, and are also more likely to develop a serious complication such as a chest infection.

In the UK, about 600 people a year die from a complication of seasonal flu. This rises to around 13,000 during an epidemic.

Symptoms of flu

The symptoms of flu will usually peak after two to three days and you should begin to feel much better within five to eight days.

However, you may have a lingering cough and still feel very tired for a further two to three weeks.

Flu can give you any of these symptoms:

- sudden fever – a temperature of 38°C (100.4°F) or above
- dry, chesty cough
- headache
- tiredness
- chills
- aching muscles
- limb or joint pain
- diarrhoea or upset stomach
- sore throat
- runny or blocked nose
- sneezing
- loss of appetite
- difficulty sleeping

TREATING FLU

If you have flu, it will usually be possible for you to treat yourself effectively at home.

If this is the case, you should:

- rest
- keep warm
- drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration

If you feel unwell and have a fever, you can take paracetamol or anti-inflammatory medicines such as ibuprofen to lower your high temperature and relieve aches.

If you are in a high-risk group and are more likely to suffer complications from flu, your doctor may prescribe antiviral medication.

Antivirals will not cure flu, but they will help to:

- reduce the length of time you are ill by around one day
- relieve some of the symptoms
- reduce the potential for serious complications

PREVENTING FLU

There are three main ways of preventing flu: good hygiene, such as handwashing and cleaning, flu vaccination and antiviral medicines.

Good hygiene

Preventing the spread of germs is the most effective way of slowing the spread of flu. Always:

- make sure you wash your hands regularly with soap and water
- clean surfaces such as your keyboard, telephone and door handles regularly to get rid of germs
- use tissues to cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze
- put used tissues in a bin as soon as possible

Don't pass it on

Catch it

Germs spread easily. Always carry tissues and use them to catch your cough or sneeze.

Bin it

Germs can live for several hours on tissues. Dispose of your tissue as soon as possible.

Kill it

Hands can transfer germs to every surface you touch. Clean your hands as soon as you can.

Further Information

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/flu>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/flu/>