

# Introduction

There is overwhelming evidence to demonstrate that after clean water, immunisations is the most effective public health intervention in the world for saving lives and promoting good health.

Northern Ireland has a very comprehensive vaccine programme, free at the point of delivery for those eligible by virtue of age or risk group status. Historically, Northern Ireland has had some of the highest immunisation uptakes worldwide. This is a tremendous tribute to GPs and all their staff, School Nursing, Health Visitors and everyone else involved in the vaccination programme that have worked very hard to achieve this and has undoubtedly contributed to reducing infectious diseases in Northern Ireland. However, it is important that we don't become complacent and continue to maintain the high uptake that has been achieved in the past.

In Northern Ireland the Government (Department of Health) decides on what vaccination programmes should be offered to the population based on advice from a national independent scientific committee. It then takes the hard work of many organisations from Health and Social Care and beyond (such as education), to deliver successful programmes so that everyone that needs a vaccine is able to receive it. These include government departments, public health experts, academic researchers, commissioners, pharmacists, school health teams, health visitors and GPs.

Vaccination Programmes are either universal, where all of the population receive the vaccine, or targeted, where just those at greater risk receive the vaccine and include:

1. Preschool vaccine programmes
2. School based vaccine programmes
3. Pregnancy vaccine programmes
4. Elderly vaccine programmes
5. Targeted programmes for adults and children
6. Health and Social Care Occupational Health vaccine programmes

The [Influenza \(flu\) Vaccine programme](#) is our largest, most comprehensive programme and is delivered every year between October and March to children, adults, and health and social care workers.

National Travel Health Network and Centre ([NaTHNaC](#)) and [TRAVAX](#) websites provides travel health advice, including information on travel vaccines, for health professionals advising people going travelling.

## **Key areas of the PHA Health Protection Immunisation Team work**

- Leadership and coordination of 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

## **Vaccine News**

[Public urged to get flu vaccine](#) (01/10/19 )

[Boys to join Girls in the HPV school vaccine programme](#) (2/07/19)

[Pregnant women reminded to get whooping cough vaccine](#) (24/06/19)

## **Statistics**

### **Statistics on uptake of vaccine programmes**

The PHA Immunisation Team publishes the [Annual Immunisation Report](#) at the end of the calendar year. This provides information on vaccine uptake for preschool, school and adult immunisation programmes in Northern Ireland.

Quarterly coverage reports on the below programmes are available [here](#).

- 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.

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