

### Should I expect a reaction to the vaccination?

After vaccination, your arm may be sore for a day or two where you had the injection. Some people get a slight temperature and aching muscles for a couple of days. Other reactions are very rare.

### Can the vaccine cause flu?

No. The viruses in the vaccine are inactivated (killed) and cannot cause flu. Some people may experience mild flu-like symptoms for up to 48 hours as their immune system responds to the vaccine, but this is not flu.

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

Most people with a serious allergy to hens' eggs can be given a flu vaccine but you need to discuss this or any other serious allergies you may have with the occupational health nurse or doctor.

The flu vaccine should not be given to those who have had an anaphylactic reaction to a previous flu vaccine.

### 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.

### Where do I get the vaccine?

If you work in a trust, details on how to obtain the vaccine will be widely advertised. Talk to your line manager or occupational health department for more information. If you work in primary care or for a private healthcare organisation, you should contact your employer.

No matter where you are working, if you are already in an 'at-risk' group because of your own health status, your GP should get in contact to offer you the flu vaccine.

### For more information on flu vaccinations visit:

[www.publichealth.hscni.net](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net)

[www.fluawareni.info](http://www.fluawareni.info)

[www.nidirect.gov.uk](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk)



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# Health and social care workers

## Don't risk flu infection



## Protect yourself, your family and your patients

## Get vaccinated early

## Why should health and social care workers get the seasonal flu vaccine?

Each year the flu vaccine protects against the most common strains of flu. Vaccinating health and social care workers aims to reduce the spread of flu in health and social care settings.

Recently adults of working age have been particularly affected by flu and some have suffered the most serious complications. Many of these were previously healthy with no underlying conditions.

Getting vaccinated early helps to:

- protect patients and service users, who can be particularly at risk of the serious complications of flu;
- protect you from getting flu and from passing it on to your family;
- protect other health and social care staff;
- make sure health and social care services are effective and efficient.

Studies have shown that vaccinating staff can help prevent infection being passed on to patients. This is particularly important as some patients may not respond well to the vaccine.

Flu is at best a nasty experience, even for people who are usually fit and healthy.

Symptoms include fever, chills, headache, aching muscles, cough and sore throat – and because flu is a virus, antibiotics won't help.

Flu 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.

## Which health and social care workers should have the flu vaccine?

All staff directly involved in caring for patients in hospitals, primary care and community settings should have the flu vaccine.

This includes medical staff, nursing staff, staff in allied health professions, ambulance staff and social care staff.

Trusts and some other health and social care employers also make the vaccine available to other staff.



## How does the vaccine work?

About a week to 10 days after you get the flu vaccine, your body makes antibodies to the vaccine virus.

These antibodies help to protect you against any similar viruses you then come into contact with.

## I had the flu vaccine last year, do I need to get it again this year?

Yes. Flu protection only lasts for one flu season, so it is important to get vaccinated every year.

## When should I have the flu vaccine?

It is important that you get your flu vaccination in October or early November to be ready to fight off infection. The earlier you get the vaccine, the sooner you will develop protection.

## How effective is the vaccine?

The flu vaccine gives between 70% and 80% protection against viruses that are a close match to the vaccine. There are many other viruses around every winter that 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 illness than if they had not been vaccinated.