

Welcome to the Stay Well This Winter e-zine

This e-zine is brought to you by the Public Health Agency and the Health and Social Care Board.



What is Stay Well?

This is the third year of Stay Well, which is about encouraging people to take positive steps and plan ahead so they are prepared to face the winter in better health.

Phase 1 of Stay Well focuses on the free flu vaccination.

The seasonal flu vaccination programme for 2018/19 is under way, so it's important that everyone who is eligible to be vaccinated against flu should see it as a positive step in protecting their health and the health of others around them.

The vaccine changes each year to cover the strains which are likely to be prevalent over the course of the flu season, so it is important to get immunised annually.

How you can help us?

- **Retweet** and **share** our social media posts
- **Post Stay Well messages** on social media
- Use **#StayWellNI** when promoting any flu or winter care issues
- Encourage those eligible to get the flu vaccination and circulate this e-zine to parents/guardians
- **Print** copies of our posters

STAY WELL THIS WINTER



Do you have a toddler or a pre-school child?

Last year only 50.6% of children aged 2-4 received the free nasal spray

Eligible children aged 2-4.

Those children born between 2 July 2014 and 1 September 2016

Talk to your GP about getting your child the flu vaccine

www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/stay-well

[@publichealthni](https://twitter.com/publichealthni)

[@HSCBoard](https://twitter.com/HSCBoard)

[#StayWellNI](https://twitter.com/StayWellNI)

October Stay Well Messages

- ◇ Get the free flu jab or nasal spray if you're eligible
- ◇ Washing hands will help reduce the risk of picking up or spreading winter viruses such as influenza and norovirus.



The flu vaccine helps protect children who receive it, as well as their younger siblings.

Children under two years are significantly more at risk of serious illness from influenza if they have older brothers or sisters, research has shown.

The flu virus spreads through the air when people cough and sneeze without covering their nose and mouth. With children of all ages mixing at parent and toddler groups, in day nurseries and at childminders, and because young children don't always cover their noses or mouths when coughing or sneezing the virus can spread very quickly among them.

Flu can cause the same unpleasant symptoms in children as it does with adults – fever, chills, aching muscles and joints, headache and extreme tiredness. These symptoms can last between two and seven days and for some can lead to serious illness and result in a stay in hospital. Complications arising from flu can include bronchitis, pneumonia and painful middle ear infection. In severe cases, which are very rare, flu can lead to disability and even death.

Younger children are more at risk and more likely to end up in hospital if they get flu. However the research suggests that babies and young children can be better protected if parents take up the opportunity to get older siblings vaccinated. The nasal spray vaccine, which is now being offered in GP surgeries to toddlers and pre-school children aged between two and four, as well as in schools to primary school children, provides a good opportunity to help protect the children who receive it, as well as their younger siblings.

Fluenz Tetra® is given as a spray up each

nostril. The child can breathe normally while the vaccine is being administered and there is no need to actively inhale or sniff.



Dr Lucy Jessop, Consultant in Health Protection at the PHA, explains the importance of the flu vaccine: “Everyone who is eligible to be vaccinated against flu should see it as a positive step in protecting their health and the health of others around them.

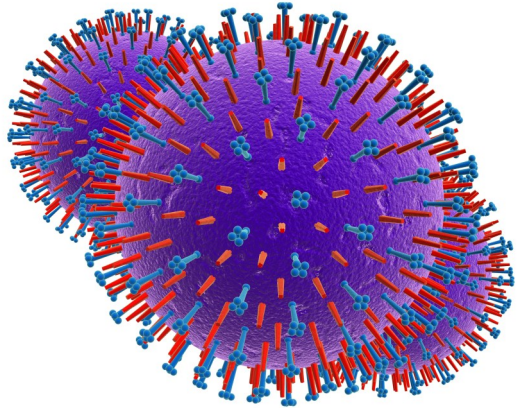
“Traditionally uptake rates for flu vaccination are very high in Northern Ireland, which is a result of the hard work and dedication from all involved in health and social care, and the excellent response from patients, taking their GP’s advice that they need the vaccine. So make sure everyone who is eligible for the vaccine gets it – whether they are two years old or over 65, it is important that they get vaccinated.”

As it takes approximately two weeks following vaccination to develop maximum protection against flu, it is important to get vaccinated. Flu vaccination clinics are just getting started and everyone who is eligible should aim to have the vaccine by early December. If you wait until flu starts circulating, it may be too late for the vaccine to protect you.

Women can also help reduce the risk of serious flu for their newborns by taking up the invitation to have the flu vaccine when they are still pregnant. Pre-school children who are aged two years or over are eligible to receive the vaccine. These children will be offered the vaccine at their GP’s surgery. Meanwhile, children in primaries one to seven will be offered the vaccine in school. In addition, people over 65, ‘at risk’ children and adults, and pregnant women, can receive the flu jab at their doctor’s surgery.

Primary school vaccine

- ◇ Because the virus spreads easily, primary school children are being offered the vaccine, giving them the best protection and also helping to protect more vulnerable members of their families too.
- ◇ We would ask parents not to forget to sign and send back the consent form to school for your primary school children, or they may miss out.
- ◇ Most children receive the vaccine via a quick and painless nasal spray.



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Primary school vaccine

HSC Public Health
Agency

Children in primaries one to seven will be offered the vaccine in school giving them the best protection

Don't forget to fill in the consent form and return it to school

