

## 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 or midwife.

The flu vaccine is licensed for use in pregnancy by the European Medicines Agency. There is a lot of evidence that flu vaccines are safe in pregnancy and for your newborn baby. Since 2009, the UK and a large number of other countries have introduced routine flu vaccine programmes for pregnant women. Millions of pregnant women have received seasonal flu vaccine, 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. Please inform your occupational health department if you have received the flu vaccine outside of work.

## For more information on flu vaccinations visit:

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



**Public Health Agency**  
12-22 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8BS.  
Tel: 0300 555 0114 (local rate).  
[www.publichealth.hscni.info](http://www.publichealth.hscni.info) [www.pha.site/flu](http://www.pha.site/flu)

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Health and social care workers

# Don't risk flu infection!



## Protect yourself, and those around you - get your flu jab

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

Each year the flu vaccine protects against the most commonly circulating strains of flu. Getting your flu vaccine will help reduce the spread of flu among your colleagues, patients or clients and family members.

### Getting vaccinated early helps to:

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

Front-line health and social care workers are more likely to be exposed to the flu virus. It has been estimated that up to 1 in 4 health and social care workers may become infected with flu during a mild flu season.

**Health and social care workers may transmit the illness to patients even if they are only mildly infected.** There are reports of flu outbreaks within hospitals and other care settings where transmission from healthcare workers to patients is likely to have facilitated the spread of the disease.

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

## Symptoms include:

**Fever, chills, headache, aching muscles, extreme fatigue, cough and sore throat – and because flu is a virus, antibiotics won't help.**

**Some people that are infected with flu don't develop any symptoms.**

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

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.

During recent flu seasons, previously healthy people of working age have been affected by flu and have suffered the most serious complications.

Early studies suggest that for some people with both COVID-19 and flu virus, the risk of serious complications and death increases. It is more important than ever to get the vaccine.

## 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, mental health staff, ambulance staff, social care staff and any staff that support clinical staff.

## How does the vaccine work?

About two weeks 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 50 and 60 per cent protection in adults aged 18-65 years against viruses that are a close match to the vaccine. There are many other viruses around every winter including COVID-19 that cause flu-like symptoms.

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.

## 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.