



UK Health
Security
Agency



Protect yourself against flu

Flu immunisation in England

Information for those in secondary school



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Helping to protect you against flu

Large print version

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A leaflet from the UK Health Security Agency and NHS

Flu immunisation – Helping to protect you against flu

Flu vaccine is offered free to:

- Children aged 2 or 3 years old (on 31 August before flu vaccinations start in the autumn)
- School-aged children (Reception to Year 11)
- Children from 6 months of age with a health condition that puts them at greater risk from flu

Further information on which children are eligible each year can be found at: [**www.nhs.uk/child-flu**](http://www.nhs.uk/child-flu)

Why should I have the flu vaccine?

Flu can be a very unpleasant illness causing fever, extreme tiredness, aching muscles and joints, stuffy nose, dry cough, and sore throat. You usually begin to feel better within about a week. Some people develop complications and need to go to hospital for treatment.

What are the benefits of the vaccine?

Having the vaccine will help protect you from what can be a very nasty illness. It can help you avoid having to miss out on the things you enjoy and disruption to your education.

The vaccine also reduces the chance of you spreading flu to others so in turn helps protect your family and friends.

I had the flu vaccination last year. Do I need another one this year?

Yes; flu viruses change every year so the vaccine may be updated. For this reason, we recommend that you are vaccinated against flu again this year, even if you were vaccinated last year.

How will the vaccine be given?

It is usually given as a nasal spray. If the nasal spray is not suitable, an injection can be given instead, usually into the muscle in the upper arm.

So how does the nasal spray work?

The nasal spray contains viruses that have been weakened to prevent them from causing flu but will help you to build up immunity.

The vaccine is absorbed quickly in the nose so, even if you sneeze immediately after having had the spray, there's no need to worry that it hasn't worked.

Are there any side-effects of the vaccine?

You may develop a runny or blocked nose, headache, general tiredness and some loss of appetite. However, these are much milder than developing flu and its complications. Serious side-effects are uncommon.

What if I am not feeling well on the day?

The vaccination may be delayed if you have a fever. Also, if you have a heavily blocked or runny nose, it might stop the vaccine getting into your system. In this case, the flu vaccination can be postponed until your nasal symptoms have cleared up.

What about those young people who have a long-term health condition?

If you have a long-term health condition that puts you at higher risk of serious complications from flu, you should have the flu vaccine every year. If you have one of these health conditions and are not in one of the groups being offered flu vaccine at school, you can also ask your GP surgery to give you the vaccine. You can also ask your GP surgery to do this if, for example, you don't want to wait until the school vaccination session.

Long term health conditions that put you more at risk from flu

These conditions include:

- serious lung problems, such as asthma needing regular use of steroid inhaler or tablets
- serious heart conditions
- kidney or liver disease
- diabetes
- weakened immune system as a result of a condition or treatment with medicines such as steroid tablets or chemotherapy
- problems with the spleen, for example, sickle cell disease, or the spleen has been removed
- a learning disability
- problems with the nervous system, such as cerebral palsy

For more information visit: www.nhs.uk/child-flu

Are there any young people who shouldn't have the nasal vaccine?

Most children and young people are offered a nasal spray vaccine which is quick and easy to administer and is the preferred vaccine for children. However, some young people may not be able to have the nasal vaccine (find out more in the next section). Your parents will be given a consent form to complete ahead of the vaccination, which will include questions to check whether it is suitable for you. They can speak with the school immunisation team if they have any questions. If you cannot have the nasal spray, you will be offered a flu vaccine injection.

Who shouldn't have the nasal vaccine?

Instead of the nasal spray vaccine, you should have an injected flu vaccine if you:

- are currently wheezy or have been wheezy in the past 72 hours
- have a very weakened immune system or someone in your household needs isolation because they are severely immunosuppressed
- have a condition that needs salicylate treatment
- have had an anaphylactic reaction to a flu vaccine, or any of the components, in the past (other than egg)

Young people who have been vaccinated with the nasal spray should avoid close contact with people with very severely weakened immune systems (for example those who have just had a bone marrow transplant) for around two weeks following vaccination.

If contact is likely or unavoidable then an alternative flu vaccine should be given. If you're not sure, check with the school aged immunisation team, or the nurse or GP at your GP surgery.

Your parents should seek the advice of your specialist, if you have:

- had a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to egg in the past that required intensive care treatment
- asthma that's being treated with steroid tablets or required intensive care treatment in hospital

Where will the vaccination be given?

School-aged children will be offered the vaccination in school, with further opportunities to get vaccinated in community clinics, for anyone who misses the session at school.

Eligible children who are home educated will be offered the vaccine. You or your parents can obtain information about arrangements from your Local Authority Education Department.

You can read the vaccine product information leaflet here:
qrco.de/flu25

Does the nasal vaccine contain gelatine derived from pigs (porcine gelatine)?

Yes. The nasal vaccine contains a very small amount of gelatine from pigs (porcine gelatine), which is used in a range of many essential medicines. The gelatine helps to keep the vaccine stable so that it is able to work properly.

The nasal spray is the preferred vaccine for children, and it is quick and easy to administer. It may also be better at reducing the spread of flu in the community. If you do not accept medicines or vaccines that contain porcine gelatine, a flu vaccine injection that does not contain gelatine is available.

Where can I get more information?

For more information visit: www.nhs.uk/child-flu

Talk to the school immunisation team, your GP, or practice nurse if you have any further questions.

For more general information about vaccinations visit:
www.nhs.uk/vaccinations

This large print leaflet is available as a standard version, in braille, audio, BSL and translated into a number of community languages.

The leaflet can be ordered or downloaded from:
www.healthpublications.gov.uk, by calling: 0300 123 1002
or by textphone: 0300 123 1003 (lines are open 8am to 6pm
Monday to Friday).

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UK Health Security Agency gateway number: 2024902

Product code: 25SECFLULP. May 2025