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Vaccination saves lives



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Flu – Get protected

Information for people having the flu vaccine by injection

Mae'r wybodaeth hon ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This information is available in Welsh.

Key facts

Protect yourself and others by having your flu vaccine.

Flu is caused by a virus that can lead to serious illness and even hospital care. In a normal winter, thousands of people in the UK will die from health problems caused by flu.

Flu is more likely to cause serious illness if you have a long-term health condition, are pregnant, or are an older adult. It can also be serious for babies under six months old.

Having the flu vaccine is a quick, simple and safe way to protect yourself. By getting vaccinated, you also reduce the chance of spreading flu to others.

Even if you have been vaccinated before, your protection fades and virus strains change over time. That is why the flu vaccine is offered every year.

Each year in Wales, around a million people have their flu vaccine. That is more than one in every four people.



Scan me for more information on flu

Act now! Get your flu vaccine when it is offered to you.

What is flu and how does it spread?

Flu is a virus that spreads easily. You can catch it when:

- someone with flu coughs, sneezes or talks near you, as tiny droplets with the virus can get into your nose, mouth or eyes, and
- you touch things with the flu virus on them (such as door handles), then touch your nose, mouth or eyes.

Fact!

Flu can spread quickly in places where people are close together, such as care homes and schools.

Flu symptoms come on very quickly and can include:

- a sudden fever and chills
- a headache
- muscle aches and pains
- feeling very tired, and
- a dry cough, sore throat and stuffy nose.

You can find more information about the symptoms of flu at **NHS 111 Wales - Health A-Z : Flu** (external site).

Who should have the flu vaccine?

You should have the flu vaccine if you are:

- ✓ pregnant
- ✓ aged 65 or over (or turn 65 before the end of the flu vaccination programme), or

- ✓ aged six months to 64 years with a long-term health condition, including:
 - problems with your chest or breathing, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or asthma, that need regular steroid inhalers or tablets
 - a heart problem
 - kidney disease (from stage 3)
 - liver disease
 - nerve conditions, such as Parkinson's disease or motor neurone disease
 - a learning disability
 - severe mental illness
 - diabetes
 - adrenal insufficiency, such as Addison's disease
 - epilepsy
 - a weak immune system due to illness or treatment
 - a missing spleen or a problem with your spleen, or
 - being very overweight (a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or more and aged 16 or over).

Even if you feel well, you are at higher risk of getting seriously ill from flu if any of the above apply to you.

If you are pregnant, an information booklet about vaccination during pregnancy is available on our website at **phw.nhs.wales/vaccine-leaflets**

The following people should also have the flu vaccine to help protect themselves and those around them.

- ✓ People living in a care home or other long stay care facility
- ✓ People working directly with patients or clients in health or social care
- ✓ People who are homeless
- ✓ People living in prison
- ✓ People who work with chickens (poultry workers) who are at high risk

- ✓ People who work with cows or pigs (livestock workers) who are at high risk
- ✓ Children aged two and three years (age on 31 August)
- ✓ School-age children and young people from reception to year 11
- ✓ Carers
- ✓ First responders and members of voluntary organisations providing planned emergency first aid
- ✓ Those who live with someone who has a weak immune system

When and where can I have the flu vaccine by injection?

From September

The table below shows who can have the flu vaccine by injection **from September**.

Group	Where to have your vaccine
Pregnant women	GP surgery, some local pharmacies, or from your midwife (in some areas of Wales)
Children aged 6 months to 2 years with a long-term health condition	GP surgery
Children aged 2 to 3 who cannot have or prefer not to have the nasal spray vaccine	GP surgery
School-age children (from reception to year 11) who cannot have or prefer not to have the nasal spray vaccine	GP surgery or in school You can ask your school nurse, GP surgery or local Health Board for advice.

If you are pregnant, you can have the flu vaccine at any stage of your pregnancy. It is recommended to have the flu vaccine as soon as you are offered it.

The flu vaccine is offered to **all** children aged between two and three and to school-age children from reception to year 11. In most cases, children and young people aged two to 17 are offered the nasal spray flu vaccine. For more information about the flu nasal spray, visit: **phw.nhs.wales/flu vaccine/eligibility**

If you are a health and social care worker, you may also be offered the vaccine from September.

From October

The flu vaccine is available to all other eligible adults from October.

In Wales, where you have your flu vaccine may depend on where you live. You may be able to have it at one of the following

- Your GP surgery
- A local pharmacy
- A care home (if you live in a care home)
- A community vaccination centre

Speak to your GP surgery or local pharmacy to find out where you can have your vaccination.

If you work in health and social care, speak to your employer about how to get your vaccine.

Ideally, the flu vaccine should be given before flu starts to spread. However, it can still be given at a later date.

I had a flu vaccine last year – why do I need another one this year?

Flu viruses change over time and protection from the vaccine fades. That is why it is important to have the flu vaccine every year if you are eligible.

It usually takes around 14 days for the vaccine to start working. The vaccine helps protect you against the most common types of flu.

Is the flu vaccine safe?

Yes, the flu vaccine is safe. It meets all safety standards. Once a vaccine is in use, its safety continues to be monitored. Millions of doses have been safely given in the UK.

Fact!

The flu vaccine cannot give you flu.

Is there anyone who should not have the flu vaccine?

Very few people cannot have the flu vaccination. You should not have the vaccine if you have had a serious (life-threatening) reaction to:

- a previous dose of the same vaccine, or
- any ingredient in the vaccine.

Speak to the person giving you the vaccine if you have had a serious allergic reaction to the vaccine or its ingredients in the past.

What about giving consent?

Young people under the age of 16 may be able to give consent themselves, if they are mature enough to fully understand what is being offered. However, it is best that parents or guardians are involved in their decision about having the vaccine.

The person giving the vaccine will always check they have consent first. They will discuss the vaccine at the appointment and answer any questions.

How is the flu vaccine by injection given?

Adults and children aged 12 months and over are given the vaccine as an injection in the upper arm.

Babies aged between six and 12 months are given the vaccine by injection into the thigh.

If you have a fear of needles, let the person giving you the vaccine know. They will support you.

Can I have the flu vaccine at the same time as other vaccines?

You can have the flu vaccine at the same time as most other vaccines. The person giving you the vaccine can discuss this with you.

What if I am unwell on the day of the vaccine?

If you are unwell, it is better to wait until you have recovered to have the vaccine, but you should try to have it as soon as possible. If you cannot go to your vaccination appointment, please cancel it and make a new appointment. If in doubt, discuss this with the person giving you your vaccination.

Fact!

A minor illness, such as a cold, is not a reason to delay your vaccine.

What are the side effects of the flu vaccine?

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects, but not everyone gets them. Most side effects are mild and may last a day or two.

The most common side effects include:

- pain, bruising, redness, swelling or a hard lump where you had the injection
- a headache
- muscle or joint pain
- tiredness
- loss of appetite
- diarrhoea
- shivering

- feeling sick
- being sick (in children)
- fever, 38C or higher (in children)
- a change in eating habits (in children)
- irritability (in children), and
- sleepiness (in children).

Please read the product information leaflet for more details on your vaccine, including possible side effects.

See the back page of this leaflet for further details on:

- the vaccine, including all possible side effects, and
- reporting suspected side effects through the Yellow Card scheme.

Rarely, people can have a severe reaction soon after the vaccination. This can cause breathing difficulties and they may collapse. This is called an anaphylactic reaction, and it can also happen with other medicines and food. These reactions are extremely rare, affecting less than one in a million people. Staff who give vaccinations are trained to manage these reactions.

People who have an anaphylactic reaction can be successfully treated. They usually recover within a few hours.

If you have any questions about side effects, you can ask the person giving you the vaccine.

Can I still get flu when I am vaccinated?

Vaccination is one of the best ways to prevent serious illness from flu. No vaccine is 100% effective, so it is still important to know the signs and symptoms of flu, even if you (or your child) are vaccinated. If you do get flu, it is likely to be milder and should not last as long. For more information about flu, visit **NHS 111 Wales – Health A-Z : Flu** (external site).

The information in this leaflet is correct at the time of publication. For the most up-to-date information, please visit phw.nhs.wales/vaccines

To help stop viruses spreading, remember to:



Catch it

Use a tissue when you sneeze or cough.



Bin it

Put the tissue in the bin as soon as possible.



Kill it

Wash your hands or use hand sanitiser.

Further information

If you have any questions or want more information, you can go to **111.wales.nhs.uk** (external site).

You can also talk to your doctor or nurse or contact NHS 111 Wales by calling **111**. You can find out more information on vaccines offered in Wales at **phw.nhs.wales/vaccines**

To find out more about the vaccine, including its contents and possible side effects, go to **medicines.org.uk/emc** (external site). You will need to enter the name of the vaccine in the search box. You can also see the patient leaflet online.

You can find the name of the vaccine at **phw.nhs.wales/flu vaccine**

You should report suspected side effects online at **www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard** (external site). You can also download the Yellow Card app, or call **0800 731 6789** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

To find out how the NHS uses your information, go to **111.wales.nhs.uk/AboutUs/Yourinformation** (external site).



Scan me to go to the Public Health Wales website

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