

The flu vaccine

Flu (influenza) (/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/flu) is a common infectious respiratory illness. You can catch flu all year round, but it's especially common in winter. This year our immunity to flu may be lower than usual.

The flu vaccine is the safest and most effective way to help protect against flu. It will also help reduce the risk of spreading flu to others.

It's likely that flu viruses and the virus that causes coronavirus (COVID-19) will both be spreading this autumn and winter. Flu is a respiratory virus so it has similar symptoms to coronavirus.

Who will be offered the flu vaccine

This year's flu vaccination programme will begin in September. The people most at risk from flu will be prioritised for the vaccine.

The following groups of people are recommended to have the free flu vaccine this year:

Adults aged 50 or over (or will be by 31 March 2022) (/flu-vaccine/who-can-get-the-vaccine/people-aged-50-or-over-those-with-a-health-condition-and-carers/)

Pregnant women (/flu-vaccine/who-can-get-the-vaccine/pregnant-women)

People aged 6 months or over with an eligible health condition (/flu-vaccine/who-can-get-the-vaccine/people-aged-50-or-over-those-with-a-health-condition-and-carers/)

Healthcare workers (/flu-vaccine/who-can-get-the-vaccine/healthcare-workers-and-nhs-independent-contractors/)

NHS independent contractors (/flu-vaccine/who-can-get-the-vaccine/healthcare-workers-and-nhs-independent-contractors/) including GP, dental and optometry practices, community pharmacists and laboratory staff (working on coronavirus testing) and support staff

Social care workers who deliver direct personal care (/flu-vaccine/who-can-get-the-vaccine/social-care-workers/)

Unpaid and young carers (/flu-vaccine/who-can-get-the-vaccine/people-aged-50-or-over-those-with-a-health-condition-and-carers/)

Nursery, primary and secondary school teachers and pupil facing support staff in both a Local Authority and Independent setting

Prisoner population

Prison officers and support staff who deliver direct front-facing detention services

Children aged 2–5 years and not yet in school (</flu-vaccine/who-can-get-the-vaccine/children-aged-2-5-years/>) (children must be aged 2 years or above on 1 September 2021 to be eligible)

Primary school children (primary 1 to primary 7) (</flu-vaccine/who-can-get-the-vaccine/primary-and-secondary-school-children/>)

Secondary school pupils (years 1 to 6) (</flu-vaccine/who-can-get-the-vaccine/primary-and-secondary-school-children/>)

Visit the child flu page (</flu-vaccine/the-vaccines/the-child-flu-vaccine/>) for more information about the flu vaccine for children.

Those aged 70 or over will be contacted by their local NHS health board with details about their appointment.

Information about how to arrange your flu vaccination for all other eligible individuals will be available soon. Please do not phone your GP practice or NHS 24 for this information.

NHS Scotland recommends you get the vaccine as soon as it is offered to you.

- i** If you or anyone in your household are showing [symptoms of coronavirus](#), rearrange your appointment.

Why should I get vaccinated?

The flu vaccine is a safe and effective vaccine, and gives the best protection against flu. It's offered every year for free by the NHS to help protect people at risk of flu and its complications.

Flu vaccines help protect against the main types of flu viruses, although there's still a chance you might get flu after having the vaccine. If you do get flu after vaccination, it's likely to be milder and not last as long.

Having the flu vaccine will also stop you spreading flu to other people who may be more at risk of serious problems from flu.

- i** Flu can be serious and life-threatening, so getting vaccinated is the safest and most effective way to protect yourself.

The vaccine takes around 10 days to work and should help protect you during this year's flu season. You have to get immunised every year because flu viruses change constantly and your immunity reduces over time.

The flu vaccine can't give you flu, but it can stop you catching it.

Which vaccines are used?

The following vaccines are routinely used in Scotland:

cell based Quadrivalent Inactivated Vaccine (QIVc) Flucelvax Tetra_([Seqirus](https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/9753/pil)).

(<https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/9753/pil>)

cell-based Adjuvanted Quadrivalent Influenza Vaccine (aQIV) (Seqirus)

(<https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/11679/pil>)

This year, the Adjuvanted Quadrivalent Influenza Vaccine (aQIV) is being offered to people aged 65 or over. This vaccine contains a substance, known as an adjuvant, to help to stimulate the immune system and create a better response.

This vaccine has been widely used in many other countries and has been shown to offer better and longer-lasting protection in older people than flu vaccines without an adjuvant.

If you have an egg allergy

Some of the flu vaccines are made using eggs.

It's important that you tell the person giving you your vaccine if you have an egg allergy or if you've ever had a serious allergic reaction to a flu vaccine.

If you're affected, please speak to your health professional for advice. An egg-free vaccine may be available.

Vaccine side effects

As with all medicines, side effects of the flu vaccine are possible, but usually mild.

More about flu vaccine side effects (</flu-vaccine/the-vaccines/side-effects-of-the-flu-vaccine/>)

Vaccine safety

All medicines (including vaccines) are tested for safety and effectiveness before they're allowed to be used.

Once they're in use, the safety of vaccines continues to be monitored by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).



Source: Public Health Scotland

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