



Guidance for social care workers

Flu vaccination

Who can get a flu vaccination?

All adult social care workers who are in direct contact with patients and service users should get the vaccine, including:

- those working in a registered residential care/nursing home and who are directly involved in the care of patients/service users
- those working for a registered domiciliary care provider and who are directly involved in the care of patients/service users
- those employed through Personal Budgets and/or Personal Health Budgets, such as Personal Assistants

Why should I get a flu vaccination?

Getting the vaccine will help to protect you, your family, and the people you care for from getting the flu.

For people in at-risk groups, such as those aged 65 or over or with an underlying health condition, flu can be a serious disease and can cause death.

As an adult social care worker, you will be caring for many people in these at-risk groups.

Getting the vaccine will mean you are much less likely to spread the flu to them and will help to protect them this winter.

Vaccination reduces the spread of flu among staff and service users, keeping social care services running and reducing the burden on the NHS during the winter. This is true every year, but it is particularly important this year, as COVID-19 is still in circulation.

As the symptoms for flu and COVID are very similar, widespread vaccination against flu will make it easier for us to target COVID testing and avoid disruption to care services.

How can I get a flu vaccination?

Your employer is responsible for ensuring that you receive a flu vaccination. They may do this by arranging for you to be vaccinated at your place of work or by arranging for you to be vaccinated off-site. Your employer should let you know which scheme they are running. If not, please ask them.

In the specific instances where an employer does not provide a flu vaccination scheme, you can still receive the flu vaccination free of charge from a GP or pharmacy through the complementary NHS scheme if you're an adult social care worker employed by a:

- registered residential care or nursing home
- registered homecare organisation hospice

Or if you provide social care through direct payments or personal health budgets. There is specific flu vaccination guidance for Personal Care Assistants at www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-immunisation-for-social-care-staff



What identification do I need to prove I am an adult social care worker if I get vaccinated at my local GP or pharmacy?

You do not need to present your ID at your local GP or pharmacy. However, we will be advising employers to issue staff with a letter saying you are an adult social care worker to make the process as easy as possible for you. Personal assistants will be provided with a letter signed by their employer confirming their eligibility for vaccination – see Personal Care Assistants guidance at www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-immunisation-for-social-care-staff

When should I get the flu vaccine?

You can get the flu vaccine throughout October, November and December. This year the demand for the flu vaccine has been higher than usual.

This has meant that while a lot of people have been able to get vaccinated, some people have not been able to get vaccinated straight away as some GP practices and pharmacies have used their early supplies of flu vaccine, due to the level of demand.

Overall there is enough flu vaccine for everyone who is eligible to get vaccinated. If you are eligible and are asked to wait, there is still time before flu season starts, which is normally in December.

Is the flu vaccination safe?

The flu vaccines used in the national NHS programme have a good safety record. The vaccines are thoroughly tested before they are made available in England. You may have a mild fever and aching muscles a few days after having the vaccine and your arm may be sore at the injection site. You can read more about possible side effects at www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/flu-influenza-vaccine.

Who shouldn't get a flu vaccine?

Most adults can have the injected flu vaccine, but you should avoid it if you have had a serious allergic reaction to a flu vaccine in the past. If you are uncertain whether you should avoid it due to a medical condition, you should speak to your GP.

You may be at risk of an allergic reaction to the flu vaccine injection if you have an egg allergy. This is because some flu vaccines are made using eggs. Ask a GP or pharmacist for a low-egg or egg-free vaccine.

If you're ill with a high temperature, it's best to wait until you're better before having the flu vaccine.

How effective is the flu vaccine?

The flu vaccine is the best protection we have against flu, which can cause serious illness and death in at-risk groups.

Studies have shown that the flu vaccine will help prevent you from getting flu.

Flu is caused by a number of different strains of the flu virus and the vaccine only protects against those that are most likely to cause flu during this year's flu season. As a result, there's not a 100% guarantee that you won't get flu if you've been vaccinated.

However, even if you do get flu after being vaccinated, studies have shown that you're likely to have a much milder and shorter illness.

You cannot catch flu from the flu vaccine because there are no live viruses in the vaccine.

I had the flu vaccine last year. Do I need to get it again this year?

Yes. The strains of flu in circulation change every year, so the protection from the vaccine you had last year will decrease over time.

New flu vaccines are produced every year to protect against the strains most likely to be in circulation, which is why people are advised to be vaccinated every year.

Can I refuse to be vaccinated?

Yes. It's important that as many health and social care workers as possible get the vaccine – it protects you, your family, and the people you care for from the flu – but if you don't want to have the vaccine for whatever reason, you don't have to have it.