



# Flu vaccination guidance for Personal Assistants (PAs)

This information is for Personal Assistants (PAs) and employers of PAs. It gives details on the benefits of receiving the free NHS flu vaccine and information about how PAs can access it.

A PA is a professional who assists people with care and support needs with performing day-to-day activities. For example, they may help with household chores, hygiene, mobility support, and in some cases provide personal care. Employment arrangements for PAs differ from those of social care workers or NHS employees, in that they are often directly employed by individuals via direct payments.

As we continue to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important that the focus on the flu virus is not lost. Flu is a serious virus that can cause severe respiratory illness, and at times can lead to death. In England, an average of 13,500 people die every year from flu, and thousands more need hospital treatment.

We want to ensure that those delivering care and those being cared for are as well-protected from the flu virus as they can be. Having the flu vaccine provides the best protection and helps prevent individuals from getting flu and from spreading it to other people.



For information on flu vaccination for [social care providers](#), [social care workers](#) and [unpaid carers](#) please see specific flu vaccination guidance available.

---

## Free flu vaccination for Personal Assistants

The 2023 to 2024 annual flu [letter](#) states that social care workers directly working with people clinically vulnerable to flu should have the flu vaccine. This includes all PAs. As a PA, if your employer does not have an occupational health scheme, you are eligible for a free NHS flu vaccination from your GP practice or a participating community pharmacy.

Achieving high uptake of flu vaccination will help to keep people most vulnerable from the effects of flu safe, keep services running and reduce the burden on the NHS and social care during winter.

## Why you should get a flu vaccination

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

For people in at-risk groups, such as older people or those with an underlying health condition, flu can be a serious disease and can cause death. As a PA, you may well be caring for people in these at-risk groups. Getting the vaccine will mean you are much less likely to catch flu and spread the virus to them, helping to protect them and yourself this winter.

## How PAs can get a flu vaccination

Many social care employers offer a free flu vaccination as part of their employee occupational health scheme so you should ask your employer about this first. The NHS also provides a vaccination scheme that provides free flu vaccinations to some social care workers and PAs who cannot access a free vaccine from their employer.

To access a free NHS vaccination, you need to attend a GP surgery or participating community pharmacy and identify yourself as a PA. You may be asked to provide proof of your employment.

If you are asked to provide proof some of the things you could use are:

1. A letter from your employer
2. An ID badge
3. A payslip

## Safety of the flu vaccination

The flu vaccines used in the national vaccination 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. Further information is available on possible [side effects](#).

---

## Effectiveness of the flu vaccine

The flu vaccine is the best protection we have against 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 given to adults.

## Getting the flu vaccination every year

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. Also, the protection from the vaccine you had last year will decrease over time.

## When you should get the flu vaccine

The best time to have a flu vaccine is in the autumn, from October to end of November. If you've missed this time, you can have the flu vaccine later in the winter although it's best to get it earlier before flu starts circulating.

## Those who shouldn't get a flu vaccine

Most adults can have the flu vaccine, but you should avoid it if you have had a serious allergic reaction to a flu vaccine in the past.

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.



## Information for direct payment holders and self-funders who employ PAs

### Your role

If you employ PAs, you should ensure they have access to the flu vaccine via your own occupational health schemes, where available. If you do not have a scheme, make your PAs aware of the availability of the free NHS flu vaccination and how they can access it. You may wish to provide your employed PAs with a letter proving their employment which they can provide, if asked, when presenting for their vaccination.

### Cost to you

If you employ a PA as a direct payment holder, via a personal health budget, or as someone who funds your own care and support needs, you are not expected to pay for their vaccines. Your PA will be eligible for a free flu vaccination from the NHS if they have no other occupational health scheme that provides them with one.



[www.nhs.uk/vaccinations](http://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations)