



UK Health
Security
Agency



Have your free NHS vaccines to help keep you well



If you are sleeping outside, staying in a homeless hostel, or a night shelter, you are at higher risk from infections like flu and pneumonia.

Getting ill is more common in winter and viruses spread more easily in shared living spaces. Having a vaccine can help prevent you from becoming unwell.

immunisation

Helping to protect everyone, at every age

The vaccines for flu and pneumonia are free

Vaccines are free, have a good safety record, and help stop serious illness and some causes of cancer.

Why do I need a flu vaccine?

The vaccine will help protect you against flu and serious complications such as bronchitis and pneumonia. You need a flu vaccine every year.

Why do I need a Pneumonia vaccine?

This infection can cause illnesses like bronchitis, ear and sinus infections. It can also cause serious illnesses, such as pneumonia and meningitis. Most people only need one pneumococcal vaccine to give them long lasting protection. If you have other health conditions you may be offered another one later.

When should I have my flu and pneumococcal vaccine?

The best time to have these is by the end of November, before flu spreads more widely (typically in December). You can still get the vaccine later in the winter. You need a flu vaccine every year.



Where to get my vaccines?

You can ask for and have your vaccines at a pharmacy, GP practice or from an outreach team who offer vaccinations.

Other free vaccines

Ask your GP about other vaccines

- **vaccines** (such as MMR (measles, mumps, rubella))
- **other vaccines** depending on your health situation

Which other vaccines do I need?

If you have missed your childhood or school-aged vaccines you can also catch up with most of them too. These include vaccines against MMR, diphtheria, tetanus and polio. They protect against infections which are still dangerous in adults. It is never too late to catch-up on these vaccines.



You should also ask about other vaccines which you may benefit from depending on your health, age or other factors that increase your chance of catching these infections or having serious complications from them. For example:

■ **people who inject drugs** should receive hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccines to protect them from these infections that damage the liver. If these are not available at your GP practice, you can get them free at sexual health services or drug services

■ **if you are pregnant** you need vaccinations to protect you and your baby from whooping cough and flu. You should also be screened (have a blood test) for infections such as hepatitis B which can pass from mother to child

■ **older adults** need vaccinations to protect them against **shingles and RSV** (as well as flu and pneumonia)

Ask your GP or nurse to check if you need catch up doses.

The needles for vaccines are very small

Lots of people do not like needles. The nurse at your GP knows how to help you to relax.

Some people like to lay down to have their vaccine. It only takes a few seconds and there is little to no pain.

You can take a friend if that helps or offer to help other friends have their vaccines.



Why get vaccinated?

- Flu and pneumococcal vaccines have a good safety record and **are the best protection we have** against flu
- if you do get ill, it is often **milder** and you may avoid going into hospital
- they help protect **people around you** as well as yourself
- infections spread more easily in shared spaces
- being unwell is harder without a safe place to rest
- vaccines can help you **stay healthier for longer**



What to expect

- quick and simple – usually an injection in your upper arm
- takes just a few minutes
- you might get a **sore arm or mild “common cold” symptoms** – these usually pass in a few days
- health professionals are trained in vaccinations and are there to support you. They have information and advice for you if you need it
- you can bring someone with you if that helps



to help keep you well

Your rights

- everyone in the UK can register with a GP
- you don't need to be a UK citizen
- no ID, proof of address, or immigration status is needed
- you can ask for an interpreter if you need one
- ask for information, and share any concerns you have, to help you decide



**I have a right to register
and receive treatment from
a GP practice**



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Groundswell

The UK Health Security Agency looks after public health. They worked with the NHS and Groundswell Homeless health charity to make this leaflet. We all want to help improve the health of people who are homeless sleeping outside or using shelters and hostels.

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