



UK Health
Security
Agency

NHS

Winter 2026 to 2027

Why do I have to wait for my flu vaccination?

Information about flu vaccine supplies for adults

People who are most at risk from the complications of flu are recommended to get a flu vaccine **every year**.



This leaflet is about adults only. There are not expected to be any issues with supply for the children's flu vaccination programme.

immunisation

helping to protect everyone at every age

Which adults are eligible for a flu vaccine?

You can get a free flu vaccine if you are:

- aged 65 years and over (including those aged 65 by 31 March 2027)
- have certain health conditions
- are pregnant
- receive a carer's allowance
- are the main carer of an older or disabled person who may be at risk if you get sick
- are rough sleeping, using a homeless hostel or a night shelter

Visit www.nhs.uk/flujab to check whether you are eligible.

You can get the flu vaccine at your GP surgery or a pharmacy, or if you are pregnant; through your maternity provider.

Why do I have to wait until October for my flu vaccine?

Most eligible adults will be offered a flu vaccine from early October, which might be slightly later than in previous years. Flu typically peaks in December or January. It is better to have the vaccine closer to when flu is expected to circulate, because the latest scientific evidence shows that protection from the flu vaccine decreases over time in adults.

Is there enough vaccine for everyone that needs one?

There should be enough flu vaccine for everyone who is eligible and wants to get vaccinated this autumn. Flu vaccines are delivered to GP practices, pharmacies and other services in batches in the run up to and over flu season. Some people may not be able to get vaccinated straight away.

Why are people being offered different types of vaccine?

There are several types of flu vaccines available. You will be offered one that is recommended for you based on your age. This could mean that some people will be offered a flu vaccine that is in stock while others, who need a different type of vaccine, may have to wait, or go to another site to get the vaccine.



I am in one of the listed groups. Why am I being asked to wait to have my flu vaccine?

Flu viruses can change from one winter to the next, so flu vaccines are updated each winter to give protection against the strains of flu that are most likely to be circulating. These updated flu vaccines then have to be manufactured in very large volumes in time for the flu season.

The flu vaccine helps to protect you against 3 different flu viruses. For this year's flu vaccines, all 3 viruses needed to be updated from last year's vaccine, which is unusual. This is one of the reasons that flu vaccine supply for the UK is being manufactured and distributed just in time this autumn.

As a result, many countries in Europe, including England are expecting supply delays, or more limited volumes of certain vaccines for their flu vaccination programmes this year.

Because of this, some people may not be able to get vaccinated straight away. However, if you are eligible and haven't been vaccinated yet, you should still be able to have it in time to give you the best protection over the peak in December or January.

Can I go elsewhere if my GP practice or pharmacy has run out?

If you are eligible for the free flu vaccine, you may get it either from your own GP practice or any pharmacy offering NHS flu vaccinations. They should be able to tell you when they expect to be able to offer you a vaccine.

Pregnant women can ask their maternity provider for the free flu vaccine and some of those visiting hospitals, either as in- or out-patients may also be offered the flu vaccine there.



When do you need to have a flu vaccination for it to offer protection?

It is best to have the vaccine before flu starts to circulate, ideally as soon as possible after the programme starts in October.

However, the vaccine is routinely offered up to December for most adults, and through to March for anyone who has become newly eligible during the season, such as pregnant women. If you have to wait and have the vaccine later than this, it is still worth having.

When is the flu season?

Flu is unpredictable and the timing of the season can change each year. Flu usually peaks in December or January, but some years it is earlier, and some years it is later.

What should I do now?

The **National Booking System** is open for eligible patients to book their flu vaccination appointment. You may also be invited by your GP practice to make an appointment. However, you do not have to wait until you receive an invite to get vaccinated. If you are eligible for a flu vaccine, but the best vaccine for you is not available yet please follow the advice from your GP surgery or pharmacy and book an appointment to get a vaccine at the next opportunity.





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1p 70K OCT 2026 (APS). UK Health Security Agency gateway
number: 2026367.

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