



Mae Brechu yn achub bywydau
Vaccination saves lives



Flu

Get protected

Flu information 2021/22



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Is flu serious?

Flu can be very serious. Like COVID-19, it is caused by a virus and it can lead to illnesses such as bronchitis and pneumonia, which may need treatment in hospital.

There are outbreaks of flu most winters, especially in hospitals and care homes.

In a normal winter, thousands of people will die from flu-related illnesses in the UK.

This winter we may see COVID-19 and flu both circulating at the same time, so it's very important to get protected.

Having a flu vaccine every year is one of the best ways to protect against flu.

Flu vaccines are quick and very safe, and could prevent weeks of serious illness.

Flu vaccines are given in a COVID-19 safe environment.

For the latest information, visit: phw.nhs.wales/flu vaccine

Will a flu vaccine protect me?

Flu vaccination is one of the best ways to protect against catching and spreading flu. Protection starts around two weeks after having the vaccine. It usually protects against flu in 3 to 6 people in every 10 who have it.

Flu viruses are constantly changing. Each year flu vaccines are changed to match the flu viruses likely to be circulating.

Some people still get flu even after having a flu vaccine, but often with milder symptoms. Flu vaccines do not protect against colds, other respiratory viruses or other winter illnesses.



Who needs protection against flu?

Flu is more likely to be serious if you have a long term health condition, are pregnant, or are older. The people at high risk of COVID-19 are generally the same people at increased risk of becoming very ill with flu.

Flu can also be serious for young children.

Last year in Wales, more than a million people got their flu vaccine. That's around 1 in every 3 people.

If any of the following apply to you, even if you feel healthy, you are more likely to get complications from flu if you catch it, and you are advised to have a flu vaccine if:

- ✓ You are pregnant
- ✓ You are aged 50 or over
- ✓ You have a long term health condition that puts you at increased risk from flu
- ✓ You live in a care home

The following groups are also advised to have a flu vaccine to protect them and the people around them:

- ✓ Children aged two and three years old (age on 31 August 2021)
- ✓ Children and young people in school years Reception to Year 11
- ✓ Carers
- ✓ People working directly with patients/clients in health or social care
- ✓ Those who live with someone who has a compromised immune system

Adults in clinical risk groups or who are carers can get their vaccine at the GP surgery or a community pharmacy.

Care home staff and domiciliary carers can get their vaccine at a community pharmacy.

Healthcare workers get their vaccine via their employer.

Children in these groups may get their vaccine at their school if they are within that age group, or at their GP surgery.



Pregnant women

If you are pregnant, having your flu vaccine will help protect you and your unborn baby.

Flu vaccine is safe during all stages of pregnancy.

If a pregnant woman gets flu, her baby is more likely to be born early, have a low birthweight, or be stillborn or die within their first week. The vaccine also helps protect the baby in the first four to six months of life, when flu can be very serious.

You should have the flu vaccine as soon as you know you are pregnant (if the vaccine is available). You can have it at the same time as the whooping cough vaccine.

For the latest information about COVID-19 vaccines and co-administration please visit phw.nhs.wales/vaccines

Don't delay your flu vaccine simply so you can have vaccines at the same time.

Pregnant women can get their flu vaccine at their general practice, or via a community pharmacy. In some areas of Wales, midwives give flu vaccines to pregnant women.

People with a long term health condition from 6 months of age

If any of the following apply to you, you are at increased risk of complications from flu even if you feel healthy, and if you get flu it could make your health condition worse. It's important you have a flu vaccine if:

- ✓ You have diabetes
- ✓ You have a heart problem
- ✓ You have a chest complaint or breathing difficulties, including asthma that requires regular steroid inhalers or tablets
- ✓ You have kidney disease (from stage 3)
- ✓ You have lowered immunity due to disease or treatment (and also close contacts of people in this group)
- ✓ You have liver disease
- ✓ You have had a stroke or mini stroke
- ✓ You have a neurological condition
- ✓ You have a no spleen or a problem with it
- ✓ You have a learning disability
- ✓ You are aged 16 or above with a higher body weight (Body Mass Index of 40 or above)

Adults in these groups can get their flu vaccine at their GP surgery, or via a community pharmacy. Children in these groups may get their vaccine at their school if they are within that age group, or at their GP surgery.



People age 50 and over

If you are aged 50 or over (including those aged 50 by 31 March 2022), you are more at risk of complications from flu than younger people.

People in this age group can get their flu vaccine at their GP surgery, or a community pharmacy.

People who live in a residential or nursing home

Most years we see outbreaks of flu in care homes and residents are more at risk of catching flu than other people. Arrangements for residents to get their flu vaccine are most likely to be made by the care home manager.

Carers

If you are a carer for someone whose health or welfare would be at risk if you became ill with flu, you should have a free flu vaccine at your GP surgery or community pharmacy.

This includes unpaid carers. Having your flu vaccination will help protect you, and also the person/people you care for.

People in this group may get their flu vaccine at their GP surgery, or via a community pharmacy.

Children and young people

Children and young people can become very ill with flu, and they can also pass it around very easily. Free flu vaccines are available for children in these groups in 2021/22:

- ✓ **All children in primary school** are offered a flu vaccine in school each year.
- ✓ In 2021/22 **all children and young people in secondary school years 7 to 11** will be offered a flu vaccine.
- ✓ All children who are aged **two or three on 31 August this year** should have a flu vaccine at their GP surgery. In some areas, three-year-olds will be offered the vaccine in nursery.
- ✓ Children aged six months or over and who have any of the **long term health conditions** listed on page **4** should have a flu vaccine every year as they are at increased risk of becoming very ill with flu.

The flu vaccine recommended for children from the age of two years is a nasal spray.

Eligible children aged six months to under two years will be offered a flu vaccine injection.

Our separate leaflet 'Flu information for children and young people in 2021/22' has more information about the vaccination for children - visit: phw.nhs.wales/flu vaccine

Health and social care workers

If you are a health or social care worker and have direct contact with patients or clients, you should have a flu vaccination to protect you and the people you care for. When you get your vaccine you are helping reduce the risk of spreading flu infection.

NHS flu vaccines are available free to frontline care home staff and domiciliary carers from most community pharmacies – you just need to take proof of your employment when you go for your vaccination. This also includes people who work in an adult care home or a children's hospice.

Healthcare workers will get their vaccine via their employer. All NHS Wales organisations actively encourage staff to get their flu vaccine each year.

If you are a member of a voluntary organisation and provide planned first aid, or if you are a community first responder, you should also have a flu vaccine. You can get this from your GP surgery or most community pharmacies – you just need to take proof of your role.

When should I get a flu vaccine?

Flu vaccines usually become available towards the end of September each year. Ideally, you should have your flu vaccine before flu starts to circulate, which is usually not before mid-December. You can have it later, but having it before flu circulates is best. It takes between 10 and 14 days for your body to build up protection after you have had a flu vaccine.

If you are in a group that is at increased risk of becoming very ill if they catch flu, you should have a flu vaccination every year.

There are different types of flu vaccine available. Some work better in different age groups. For the best protection, it is important to have a flu vaccine recommended for your age.

Speak to your doctor, nurse or community pharmacist for more details.

Can the flu vaccine be given at the same time as other vaccines?

Yes, flu vaccines can be given at the same time as most other vaccines.*

Will I get any side effects from a flu vaccine?

After having a flu vaccine most people feel well. Some people get a slight temperature, feel tired, have a headache, or have aching muscles for a day or two. Your arm may be a bit red and sore.

After the nasal spray flu vaccine some children may get a temperature, feel tired, have a headache, have aching muscles or have a reduced appetite for a day or two. The nasal spray may cause a runny or blocked nose.

- Other side effects are very rare.
- The flu vaccine will not cause flu.

Is there anyone who should not have a flu vaccine?

There are very few people who cannot have a flu vaccine.

- ✗ People who have previously had a serious allergic reaction to a flu vaccine (or any part of it) should not have that vaccine again.
- ✗ Tell the person going to give you the immunisation if you have a serious egg allergy. You can still have a flu vaccine but special arrangements might be needed.
- ✗ A cold or other minor illness is not a reason to delay a flu vaccination.
- ✗ If you are unwell with a high temperature, delay the vaccination until you feel better.

*For the latest advice on COVID-19 vaccines and co-administration please visit: phw.nhs.wales/covidvaccine

What do I need to do?

If you are an adult in a risk group, are pregnant, or are aged 50 or over, you can get your flu vaccine at your GP surgery or at some community pharmacies. If you work in health or social care, ask your employer where to get your vaccine.

Care home staff and domiciliary carers should talk to their community pharmacy about getting their flu vaccine.

If your child is eligible for a flu vaccine, you should be contacted by their GP surgery or school nurse. If you think your child might have missed their vaccine, contact the school nurse if they are school aged, or GP surgery if they are not in school.

How will I know if I have flu?

When people get flu they tend to become ill quite quickly. Symptoms can include fever, chills, a headache and aching muscles, often with a cough and sore throat.

Around half of people with flu don't even realise it, and they can still spread it to others, sometimes with devastating effects.

Some COVID-19 symptoms are similar to flu so please check the latest advice and follow the current COVID-19 guidelines.

For the latest information on COVID 19 and flu vaccines visit: phw.nhs.wales/vaccines

For the latest information on flu visit: phw.nhs.wales/flu vaccine

What should I do if I think I have flu?

If you have a temperature or a cough, follow advice for what to do for COVID-19 symptoms, visit: gov.wales/check-your-symptoms-see-if-you-need-coronavirus-medical-help

Flu is usually managed by resting at home, keeping warm and drinking plenty of water. You can take paracetamol or ibuprofen to lower a high temperature and relieve aches if necessary.

However, if you are in a high risk group you should speak to your GP surgery or community pharmacy promptly if you think you might have flu, as they may recommend a course of antiviral medicines.

To help stop flu and other viruses spreading, remember to:

CATCH IT



use a tissue when you sneeze or cough

BIN IT



put the tissue in the bin as soon as possible

KILL IT



by washing your hands or use hand sanitizer.

Where can I get more information?

Visit phw.nhs.wales/flu vaccine

You can find out more about flu vaccines, including their contents and possible side effects, at:

medicines.org.uk/emc

Enter the name of the vaccine in the search box.

You can find out how to report suspected side effects online at: yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk or call the Yellow Card hotline on **0800 731 6789** (Monday to Friday 10am to 2pm).

A schedule showing which immunisations are routinely offered in Wales is available from:

111.wales.nhs.uk/CompleteSchedule

If you have any questions or want more information, you can visit: 111.wales.nhs.uk, talk to your doctor or nurse or call **NHS 111 Wales**.

If 111 is not available in your area please call 0845 46 47. Calls from landlines and mobiles cost 2p per minute plus your telephone provider's usual charge.

To order more copies of this leaflet, visit:

publichealthwales.org/HealthInformationResources

To find out how the NHS uses your information, visit:

111.wales.nhs.uk/lifestylewellbeing/yourinfoyourrights

This flu season, arrangements may be different due to COVID-19. For the latest information, visit:

phw.nhs.wales/flu vaccine



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