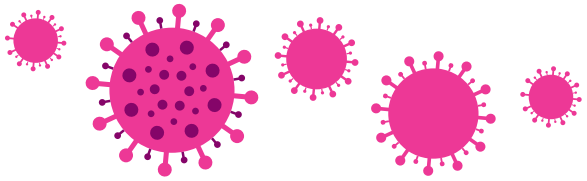
England

Help protect your child from flu this winter



Each winter paediatricians see many cases of flu in children and young people. It's important to remember that flu isn't just a bad cold, it can make children feel very poorly and lead to serious complications.

Every winter in the UK, thousands of children, even those without underlying health conditions, need hospital care because of flu.

Common symptoms include:

- A high temperature
- Aching muscles and joints
- Extreme tiredness
- Cold-like symptoms such as a cough and sore throat
- In some cases, flu can lead to more serious problems like pneumonia or needing hospitalisation.

What can you do?

The best way to help protect your child is to get them vaccinated against flu. Flu vaccines are safe, effective, and offered free by the NHS. It not only helps protect your child from becoming seriously unwell but also helps reduce the spread of flu to others who may be more vulnerable, such as grandparents, babies, and those with long-term health conditions.

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Who can get the flu vaccine?

NHS England offers the children's flu vaccine every autumn or early winter to:

- Children aged 2 or 3 years on 31 August. Children can usually get their vaccine through their GP surgery or a participating pharmacy.
- Children aged 4 years who have not yet started school may be eligible for vaccination through their GP surgery if they qualified for the programme as a 3 year old (for example, because they turned 4 on or after 1 September). Children who are old enough to attend school are usually offered vaccination through school-age immunisation services. Availability may vary depending on local arrangements.
- School-aged children from Reception to Year 11. Most children will be offered their vaccine through the school vaccination programme, with community clinics available for those who miss their appointment or are home educated.
- Children aged 6 months to 17 years with certain long-term health conditions. Children may be vaccinated via their school immunisation team, through their GP surgery or, if they are over 2 years of age, at a participating pharmacy.

Most children eligible for a flu vaccine can have the nasal spray, which is quick, painless, and effective. However, some children may be offered the injected flu vaccine instead, especially if:

- They are aged 6 months to under 2 years and eligible for flu vaccination
- They have had a serious allergic reaction to a previous dose of the nasal spray vaccine, or to one of its ingredients
- They have a severely weakened immune system, or live with someone who does
- They have severe asthma, have recently experienced a flare-up of asthma symptoms, or are taking long-term steroid tablets
- They are receiving salicylate therapy
- They or their parents do not wish to have the nasal spray vaccine because it contains porcine gelatine

If you are unsure which vaccine is suitable for your child, speak to your GP surgery, school nurse or local school immunisation team.

Parents and carers should usually receive information about their child's flu vaccination from their GP surgery, school or local school immunisation team. **If your child is eligible and you have not received any information, or if they miss their appointment, contact your GP surgery or local school immunisation team to arrange vaccination or discuss catch-up options.**

How effective is the vaccine at preventing flu?

While flu vaccine effectiveness varies from year to year, depending on how closely the vaccine matches the flu strains in circulation, flu vaccines protect against more than one type of flu virus and can still provide important protection.

It can also significantly reduce the severity of illness if a child does get flu, helping to lower the risk of complications, hospital admission and intensive care treatment, particularly among young children and others at increased risk.

Does the vaccine cause flu?

No. The flu viruses in the injected vaccine are inactivated and cannot cause flu. The nasal spray vaccine contains live viruses that have been weakened and cannot cause flu.

If my child was vaccinated last year, do I need to do it again?

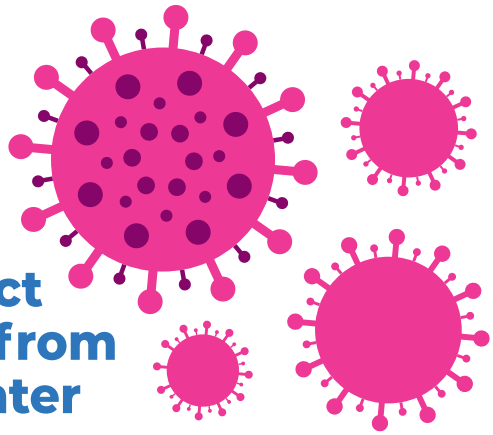
Yes. You need to get your child vaccinated again this year, even if they were vaccinated last year. Flu viruses change annually, so a new vaccine is created each year to protect against the most likely circulating strains.

Are there side effects to the vaccine?

Side effects of the nasal spray flu vaccine can include a runny or blocked nose, headache and tiredness, but this is not flu. The injected flu vaccine can also cause mild side effects, such as a raised temperature or aching muscles, but this is not flu. Any side effects from the vaccine are usually mild, short-lived and much less serious than flu itself.

Need more information?

www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/child-flu-vaccine



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