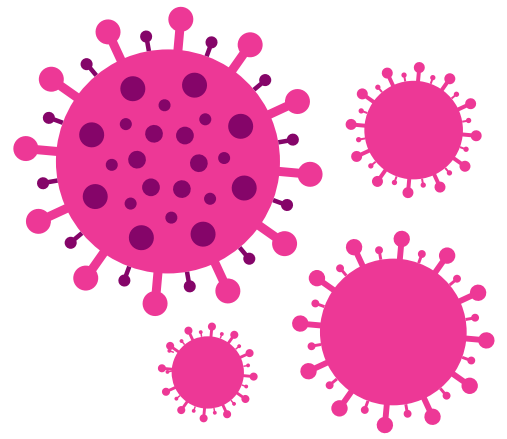


Help protect your child from flu this winter



This winter paediatricians are seeing high rates of flu cases 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. The flu vaccine is 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.

Who can get the flu vaccine?

NHS Wales offers a free children's flu vaccine every autumn or early winter to:

- All children aged 2 and 3 years of age on 31 August 2025
- School-aged children from Reception to Year 11
- Children aged 6 months to 17 years with certain long-term health conditions

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're under 2 years old
- They have a certain medical condition are on specific treatment, are pregnant or have allergies to the vaccine.
- They have a weakened immune system or live with someone who does
- They have a wheezy chest on the day or in the previous three days or have recent asthma symptoms
- They do not accept the use of porcine gelatine in medical products

If you're unsure which vaccine is suitable for your child, speak to your GP or school nurse.

How will your child be offered the vaccine?

Details on local arrangements are available on health board websites. In general:

- Children aged 2 to 3 can get their vaccine from their GP and in some areas 3 year olds can get their vaccine in nursery.
- Children and young people who attend school will usually have their flu vaccine in school by school nurses. Parents will be given information about the vaccine, along with a paper or digital consent form.
- Children and young people aged four or older who are outside mainstream education can have their flu vaccine at their GP surgery or community vaccination clinic.
- Children aged under two, or 16 or 17 years of age, and at greater risk of complications from flu due to a health condition will be invited by their GP to have their vaccine.

Missed the appointment?

If your child misses their flu vaccine, speak to their health visitor (if your child is under 5), school nurse or GP surgery to find out about local arrangements for getting their vaccine at another time.

How effective is the vaccine at preventing flu?

While the flu vaccine effectiveness varies year to year, depending on the match between the strain of flu in circulation and that contained in the vaccine, it will always offer a form of protection.

It also significantly reduces the severity of illness if you do get sick, lowering the risk of hospitalisation, intensive care admission and even death in high-risk groups such as the elderly and young children.

Does the vaccine cause flu?

No. The flu viruses in the injectable vaccine are inactivated and cannot cause flu. The nasal 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 nasal flu vaccine can include cold like symptoms, headache and feeling tired but this is not flu. The injectable flu vaccine can also cause side effects of a raised temperature or aching body, but this is not flu. The side effects from the vaccine are much milder than having flu disease.

Need more information?

phw.nhs.wales/topics/immunisation-and-vaccines/winter-vaccinations/#How



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