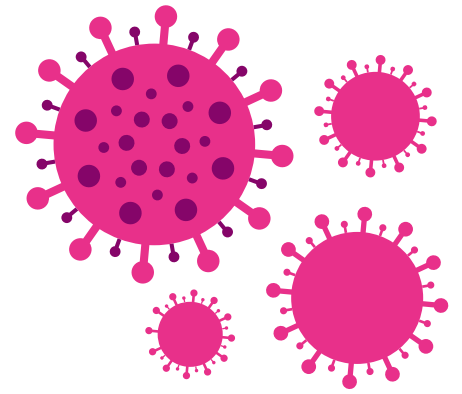


Help protect your child from flu this winter



This winter paediatricians are seeing high rates of flu in children and young people. Flu isn't just a bad cold, it can make children feel very poorly and sometimes results in serious complications.

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 hospitalisation.

What can you do?

The best way to protect your child is to get them vaccinated against flu. The flu vaccine is safe, effective, and offered free by the NHS. It does not prevent flu infection completely but DOES make serious complications much less likely and 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 Scotland offers the children's flu vaccine every autumn or early winter to:

- **Children aged 6 months to 2 years with an eligible health condition.** Parents or carers will receive a letter from NHS Scotland. This will have details of an appointment or how to book one.
- **Children aged 2 to 5 years and not yet at school** (children must be aged 2 years or above on 1 September 2025 to be eligible). Parents or carers will receive a letter from NHS Scotland. This will have details of an appointment or a phone number to call to arrange an appointment.
- **Primary and secondary school pupils** will be offered the vaccine in school. Children will be sent home with a letter, leaflet and consent form.
- **Home educated children and young people, and anyone not attending mainstream education** are also eligible for the flu vaccine. Vaccination can be arranged by contacting your local [NHS immunisation team](#).

Most children eligible for a flu vaccine can have the nasal spray, which is quick, painless, and effective. Children in the following groups are offered the injected flu vaccine instead:

- They're between 6 months to 2 years
- They have a serious condition that affects their immune system
- They have a weakened immune system because they have had a transplant or are getting treatment for serious conditions, such as cancer
- They are taking regular high doses of oral steroids for asthma control
- They are undergoing salicylate treatment (for example, taking aspirin)
- They live with someone who needs isolation because they have a severely weakened immune system.

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

Missed the appointment?

If you've missed your appointment, then contact your [local health board](#) 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?

www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/immunisation/child-flu-vaccine/



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