



Together we can fight flu – Q&A

The frequently asked questions below aim to answer some of your questions about getting the flu vaccination this winter, anything we've missed? email us at wlcg.nkrt@nhs.net

Is the flu vaccination safe?

The flu vaccination is safe and effective and must be given annually. It cannot give you the flu. It does not protect you from COVID-19 or seasonal coughs and colds, but it does give protection against the strains of flu virus that will be circulating this year.

Adults usually receive the flu vaccination in injection form, and children usually receive a nasal spray.

When can I get the flu vaccination?

The flu vaccination is available from the end of September 2020 onwards. You will be invited to book a vaccination appointment at around this time, but please contact your GP practice if not.

Where can I get the flu vaccination?

Many people will receive their flu vaccination at a GP surgery, patients over the age of 18 can now also book a flu vaccination at their local pharmacy in one of three convenient ways:

- Telephone or visit the pharmacy of your choice and ask to book a flu vaccination
- Book your flu vaccination online at any local pharmacy other than Boots via <https://myvaccinations.co.uk>
- Book your vaccination at Boots online at <https://www.boots.com/online/pharmacy-services/winter-flu-jab-services>

School-aged children will receive their vaccination from a trained health professional at school or in their community. Health professionals will also visit care homes to vaccinate residents on-site.

Is it safe to attend appointments at health clinics?

NHS premises are safe, it is really important you attend to get your flu vaccination this winter. Changes have been made to make sure it's safe for you to have the flu



vaccine at GP surgeries and pharmacies. These changes include social distancing, hand washing and wearing protective equipment.

You are at greater risk of having a serious illness if you don't have the flu jab.

It's important to go to your appointments unless you or someone you live with has symptoms of coronavirus. If you have COVID-19 symptoms, do not attend your vaccination appointment but instead self-isolate and book a coronavirus test at nhs.uk/coronavirus or by calling 119. You can rebook your flu vaccination appointment at a later date.

Will the flu jab protect me against Covid-19?

No just the flu.

Is the vaccine stronger this year?

No, this year's vaccine has been designed to target this season's strain of flu, as with every year.

Are there side effects?

Possibly a mild temperature, sore arm or slight muscle aches for a day or so. This is entirely normal. Serious allergic reactions are rare.

Is gelatine used in the flu vaccine?

The flu jab does not include gelatin. The nasal spray vaccine that protects children against flu contains porcine gelatin. This is offered to children as it is more effective than the injected vaccine.

- **Why?**
Porcine gelatine is used in vaccines as a stabiliser – to ensure that the vaccine is safe when it is stored. Unlike the gelatine used in foods, the product used in vaccines is purified and broken down into very small molecules.
- **Is there an alternative?**
If your child is at high risk and can't have the nasal vaccine they should have the injection.

Flu vaccine ingredients

There are several types of injected flu vaccine. None of them contain live viruses so they are called inactivated vaccines. If you're eligible for the flu vaccine on the NHS, you'll be offered one that's most effective for you, depending on your age:

- adults aged 18 to 64 – there are different types, including low-egg and egg-free ones



- adults aged 65 and over – the most common one contains an extra ingredient to help your immune system make a stronger response to the vaccine

Talk to a GP, practice nurse or pharmacist for more information about these vaccines and if you have any concerns.

How will I know if I have the flu or COVID-19?

The flu virus and COVID-19 have symptoms which are the same, such a high temperature or persistent cough. It may be difficult to tell which virus you have. For this reason, it's really important that you have a flu vaccination if you are eligible, and that you continue to follow the guidance on self-isolation and testing at [nhs.uk/coronavirus](https://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus) if you have any of the symptoms of COVID-19.