



CARE

BOOST YOUR IMMUNITY

**GET VACCINATED
WITH THE FLU
+ COVID-19 VACCINES**

Flu and COVID-19 can be life-threatening, so help protect yourself, your family and the people you care for.

Don't delay, get your vaccines now.

For some people flu and COVID-19 can be serious, and as a health or social care worker, you're more likely to be exposed to the flu and COVID-19 viruses. More people get these viruses over winter, which is why it's important that health and social care workers get both their flu vaccine & COVID-19 booster as soon as possible.

The flu and COVID-19 vaccines are the best way to protect yourself from both viruses, so you can continue to be there for your family and friends, and the people you care for.

Here are some answers to questions you may have about getting the flu vaccine and COVID-19 booster.

Why should social care workers receive the flu vaccine?

Flu is an unpredictable virus that can kill thousands of people during a flu season. There have been very low levels of flu activity in the last two years because of the measures that were in place to reduce COVID-19 infections, such as social distancing and mask-wearing. This means that there may be a rebound in flu levels this coming winter because people will be mixing more and they may also be more susceptible to flu as they have not been exposed to the virus.

Being healthy doesn't reduce your risk of getting flu or passing it on. You can have flu without any symptoms and pass it on to family, friends, colleagues and those you care for, many of whom may be at increased risk from flu.

How effective is the flu vaccine?

The flu vaccine is your best protection against the virus. It will not stop all flu viruses but if you do get flu after vaccination, it's likely that the disease will be milder and shorter-lived than it would otherwise have been.

What are the side effects of the flu vaccine?

You may get a slight temperature, and your arm may feel a bit sore where you have the injection. Other reactions are rare. Most side effects are mild and only last for a day or so.

I had the flu vaccine last year. Do I need to have it again?

Yes. The viruses which cause flu can change every year, which means the flu (and the flu vaccine) this year may be different from last year.

I'm pregnant or breastfeeding – should I get the flu vaccine?

You should have the flu vaccine if you're pregnant to help protect you and your baby. It's safe to have the flu vaccine at any stage of pregnancy, from conception onwards. It's also safe for women who are breastfeeding to have the vaccine.

Who should not have the flu vaccine?

Most adults can have the flu vaccine, but you should avoid it if you had a serious allergic reaction to a flu vaccine in the past.

You may be at risk of an allergic reaction to the flu vaccine injection if you have ever had a serious allergy to the vaccine, or any of its ingredients. If you are allergic to eggs or have a condition that weakens your immune system, you may not be able to have certain types of flu vaccine – check with your vaccinator.

If you're ill with a high temperature, it's best to wait until you're better before having the flu vaccine.

How long does the flu vaccine take to become effective?

It takes the immune response about two weeks to fully develop after vaccination.

Can the flu vaccine cause flu?

There are several types of injected flu vaccine. None of them contain live viruses so they cannot give you flu.

Why is it particularly important to get the flu vaccine this year?

Flu and COVID-19 can both be life-threatening and spread more easily in winter when we are more likely to be indoors or in crowded spaces. That's why it's important that eligible people come forward for their flu vaccine and COVID-19 booster. If you catch flu and COVID-19 at the same time, research shows you're more likely to be seriously ill.

How do I get my flu vaccine?

The flu vaccine is available from September and social care workers are advised to get the vaccine as soon as possible.

The seasonal flu vaccine should be provided by employers as part of the organisation's policy to prevent the transmission of infection. Social care workers who are in direct contact with people who receive care should also have the vaccine provided by their employer. There are circumstances where frontline staff who do not have access to employer led occupational health schemes, can access the flu vaccine through the NHS free of charge.

You can also have the flu vaccine if you provide social care through direct payments or personal health budgets, or both, such as personal assistants.

Why should social care workers receive the COVID-19 booster?

To maintain a high level of protection through the coming winter, social care workers will be offered a booster vaccine to protect themselves and those in their care who are most at risk.

With both flu and COVID-19 expected to be circulating this winter, it's important to boost your immunity and help protect yourself and others.

Why do I need a COVID-19 booster, when I have had two COVID-19 vaccines already?

The Joint Committee on Vaccinations and Immunisations (JCVI) has advised booster vaccinations as a precaution, to ensure that the protection built up against COVID-19 does not decline through the winter months.

What are the common side effects of the COVID-19 booster?

As with your previous dose the common side effects are the same for all COVID-19 vaccines used in the UK, and include:

- having a painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm where you had your injection. This tends to be worst around 1 to 2 days after the vaccine
- feeling tired
- headache
- general aches, or mild flu-like symptoms

You can rest and take paracetamol (follow the dose advice in the packaging) to help make you feel better.

Are there any serious side effects to having the COVID-19 vaccine?

Worldwide, there have also been very rare cases of inflammation of the heart called myocarditis or pericarditis reported after some vaccinations.

These cases have been seen mostly in younger men within several days after vaccination. Most of these people recovered and felt better following rest and simple treatments.

You should seek medical advice urgently if, after vaccination, you experience:

- chest pain
- shortness of breath
- feelings of having a fast-beating, fluttering, or pounding heart

Is there anyone who shouldn't have a COVID-19 booster?

There are very few people who should not have a booster.

If you have had a severe reaction to a previous dose of the vaccine you should discuss this with your doctor.

How and when will I receive my COVID-19 booster?

The COVID-19 booster may be offered through your employer or you can book through the National Booking Service/calling 119 or find a walk-in appointment through the online vaccination walk-in finder.

I'm pregnant or breastfeeding – can I get the COVID-19 booster vaccine?

Vaccination remains the best way to help protect against the known risks of COVID-19 for breastfeeding mothers and in pregnancy, for both mother and baby. If you have any questions you can discuss having the booster with your GP practice or maternity team.

Has the COVID-19 booster been given to people like me?

As with any medicine, vaccines are highly regulated products. There are checks at every stage in the development and manufacturing process and continued monitoring once it has been authorised and is being used in the wider population.

Each of the vaccines are tested on tens of thousands of people across the world. They are tested on both men and women, including people with underlying health conditions, on people from different ethnic backgrounds, and of all age groups.

I've had COVID-19 already. Do I need to get the booster?

Getting vaccinated is just as important for those who have already had COVID-19 as it is for those who haven't.

The COVID-19 vaccine provides additional protection, beyond that of natural immunity from previous infection alone, against serious complications of infection. You should also have some protection from the mild symptoms and protection against severe disease is expected to remain high against future variants.

If you have had COVID-19 you will still get extra protection from the vaccine, but you will need to wait 4 weeks before getting vaccinated.

Will I get the COVID-19 booster at the same time as my flu vaccine?

You may be offered both at the same time, or separately. If you are offered either vaccine, get them as soon as possible. We would advise you not to wait to try and schedule both vaccinations at the same time as this may not be possible and could delay your protection for the winter ahead.

Is it safe to have the flu vaccine and COVID-19 booster at the same time?

The JCVI has advised that, for most people, it is fine to have the flu vaccine and COVID-19 booster vaccine at the same time.

You may be offered them at the same time or you may be offered, or to decide to have them, separately. We would encourage you to get both vaccinations as soon as you can and not delay.



For more information visit
www.nhs.uk/flujab and www.nhs.uk/covidvaccination