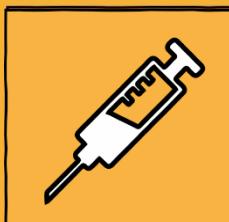
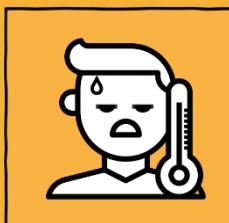


Groundswell

Out of homelessness



Protecting yourself from the flu and looking after your health

Can I get the flu vaccine?

The flu vaccine is free through the NHS if:

- You're **over 65**
- You're **pregnant**
- You have **asthma or a lung condition**
- You have **chronic heart disease**
- You have **diabetes**
- You have a **chronic kidney or liver condition**
- You've had a **stroke**
- You have an illness or are taking medicines that affect your **immune system**
- You were required to **shield** from coronavirus
- In London if you are homeless you qualify for **free flu vaccine**. GP's and pharmacies may offer this in other areas, check with them.

If you are unsure if you are eligible for a free flu vaccine, check with your local GP or pharmacy. It is important to note that due to COVID-19 flu vaccine supplies may be limited this year.



What is flu?

- Flu is a respiratory illness **affecting the windpipe and lungs, it is most common in winter**.
- It is spread through an infected person **coughing and sneezing**, and it also spread through infected surfaces.
- **Flu can be serious**; each year thousands of people go to hospital and around 10,000 people die from the flu.
- In **most cases people will make a full recovery**; however it can weaken the body's strength and increase inflammation, making pre-existing medical conditions worse.

The main symptoms:

- Fever and/or chills
- Headaches
- Aches and pains
- Extreme tiredness



How do I know if its flu or covid-19?

The flu and coronavirus are both illnesses causing similar symptoms, but they are caused by different viruses. **Coronavirus has additional symptoms of a persistent cough or change in/loss of taste and smell.**

Where do I get the flu vaccine from?

You can get the flu vaccine safely at:

- GP surgeries
- Pharmacies offering vaccinations
- Midwifery services if you are pregnant
- You may also be able to get a flu vaccine through outreach or additional clinics, check with your GP or pharmacy.



You can book a flu vaccine through your GP or pharmacy (either online or on the phone). Be aware that due to coronavirus and varying local restrictions your GP or pharmacy may be operating differently.

Your appointment

- Your appointment may be in a different place from usual, check in advance.
- If you need to use public transport, you must wear a face covering.
- If you are feeling unwell or think you might have coronavirus, please do not attend your appointment and reschedule your appointment.

More information

How serious is the flu?

The following people are more vulnerable to flu becoming more serious which could lead to hospitalisation and bronchitis or pneumonia:

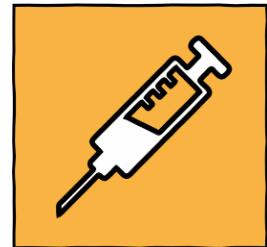
- People aged 65 or over
- People with a long-term health conditions
- People who are pregnant
- People with weakened immune system



If you are experiencing homelessness you may be more vulnerable to these conditions.

What is the flu vaccine?

- The flu vaccine is the **best way to protect yourself this winter from getting the flu**. The cold weather means the virus can spread quicker
- The vaccine **protects individuals from getting infected** by the main types of flu and **protects people from spreading the virus** too.
- As the flu can make pre-existing conditions worse, the vaccine is important in **reducing the risk of becoming seriously ill**. The vaccine cannot give you flu however you may experience mild side effects. These side effects are not flu and will only last a couple of days.
- It is best to **get the vaccine in autumn** however you can still have it up to March. It takes 14 days for the vaccine to take effect.
- There is a small chance you could still get the flu after getting the vaccine. However, if you did catch the flu after the vaccine it would be likely to be much milder.
- Importantly, **if you had the flu vaccine last year, you still need to have another one this year**. Each year there are different types of flu so a new vaccine is made each year. You may be at risk of an allergic reaction to the flu vaccine if you have an egg allergy. Speak to your GP or pharmacy.
- The **flu vaccine will not protect you from covid-19** however if you have both the flu and covid-19 together it can increase the risks of getting complications.



Why should I get the flu vaccine?

- The flu vaccine is the **best way to protect yourself and others from getting the flu**. The cold weather means the virus can spread quicker and you can be more likely to catch it.
- The flu can lead to complications such as hospitalisation for anyone but people with underlying health conditions are particularly vulnerable to the virus being more severe.
- It is **extra important this year to get the flu vaccine due to coronavirus** also being around this winter. If you were to get both at the same time, it could mean you are more likely to suffer complications.

I think I've already had flu this year – is it too late?

You can still get a vaccine (if you fit the criteria listed). Other viruses can give flu like symptoms so it's better to be safe. As there are multiple types of flu virus you should still get the vaccine as it changes each year.

