



# Flu vaccination guidance for social care workers and carers

This information is for social care workers and carers. It gives details on the benefits of the flu vaccination and options for accessing it. Those who should receive a flu vaccination include all frontline adult social care workers, social care workers working with children who are clinically vulnerable to flu, and some carers.

The government is grateful for the dedication and commitment shown by all our social care workers, carers and the organisations involved in keeping people with care and support needs safe during the pandemic. Colleagues across the sector rose to this unprecedented challenge and have gone above and beyond the call of duty to keep those they care for safe.

As we continue to deal with these challenges it is important that the focus on the flu virus is not lost. We want to ensure that those delivering care are as well-protected from the flu virus as they can be, including both for the staff within it and the people being cared for. Securing access to the flu vaccine is the best way to do this.

Flu vaccination for social care staff directly working with people clinically vulnerable to flu, as well as carers, is strongly encouraged. We have developed this guidance to support staff and carers to ensure there is high uptake of the flu vaccine this season.

For information on flu vaccination for [social care providers](#) and [personal assistants](#) please see specific flu vaccination guidance available to you.



## Those who should get the flu vaccine

All frontline social care workers should be encouraged to get the flu vaccine provided by their employer to protect themselves and those they care for. As a social care worker, you should be provided access to the flu vaccine by your employer, however you may also be eligible for a free flu vaccine under the NHS complementary scheme if your employer does not provide a flu vaccination scheme. This includes all frontline workers employed by the following types of social care providers without employer-led occupational health schemes:

- a registered residential care or nursing home
- registered domiciliary care provider
- a voluntary managed hospice provider
- Direct Payment (personal budgets) or Personal Health Budgets, such as Personal Assistants (PAs)

Your employer can support you in ensuring that you receive a flu vaccination. They may do this by arranging for you to be vaccinated at your place of work or by arranging for you to be vaccinated off-site. Your employer should let you know which scheme they are running, or, where applicable, advise you to use the NHS complementary scheme. If not, please ask them.

If you are employed as a personal assistant (PA) through a direct payment or personal health budget, you are eligible for a free flu vaccination, and there is [specific flu vaccination guidance available to you](#).

Carers are eligible for a free flu vaccination through the NHS if they receive a carer's allowance or are the main carer for an older or disabled person who may be at risk if the carer gets sick.

## Why you should get a flu vaccine

Getting the vaccine will help to protect you, your family, and the people you care for from getting the flu.

There have been very low levels of flu activity in the last 2 years because of COVID-19 control measures and reduced contact between people. As social contact and activity picks up there is likely to be a resurgence of flu this winter, to levels similar to or higher than before the pandemic.

For people in at-risk groups, such as older people or those with an underlying health condition, flu can be a serious disease and can cause death. As someone delivering social care or as a carer, you will be caring for many people in these at-risk groups. Getting the vaccine will mean you are much less likely to spread the flu to them and will help to protect those you are caring for this winter.

Vaccination reduces the spread of flu among staff and the people you care for, helping to keep care services running and reducing the burden on the NHS during the winter. This is true every year, but it is particularly important this year, as coronavirus (COVID-19) is still in circulation and a rebound in flu activity is likely.

## Identification needed to prove you are a social care worker or carer

As a social care worker, if you are advised by your employer to utilise the NHS complementary scheme you do not need to present your ID at your local GP or pharmacy when receiving the flu vaccine. However, if your employer can provide you with a letter identifying you as a social care worker in case you are asked to provide this information it may make things easier on the day.

If you are a carer, you may be eligible for the flu vaccine if you are the main carer of someone who is elderly or disabled and who would be at risk if you got sick, or you receive a carer's allowance. You should let your GP or pharmacy know this when you arrive for your flu vaccine.



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## Safety of the flu vaccination

The flu vaccines used in the national vaccination programme have a good safety record. The vaccines are thoroughly tested before they are made available in England.

You may have a mild fever and aching muscles a few days after having the vaccine and your arm may be sore at the injection site. Further information is available on possible [side effects](#).

## Effectiveness of the flu vaccine

The flu vaccine is the best protection we have against flu, which can cause serious illness and death particularly in at-risk groups.

Flu is caused by a number of different strains of the flu virus and the vaccine only protects against those that are most likely to cause flu during this year's flu season. As a result, there's not a 100% guarantee that you won't get flu if you've been vaccinated.

However, even if you do get flu after being vaccinated, studies have shown that you're likely to have a much milder and shorter illness.

You cannot catch flu from the flu vaccine because there are no live viruses in the adult flu vaccine.

## Getting the flu vaccination every year

The strains of flu in circulation change every year, so the protection from the vaccine you had last year will decrease over time.

New flu vaccines are produced every year to protect against the strains most likely to be in circulation, which is why people are advised to be vaccinated every year.

## When to get the flu vaccine

The best time to have a flu vaccine is in the autumn, from September to end of November. If you've missed this time, you can have the flu vaccine later in the winter although it's best to get it earlier before flu starts circulating.

## Those who shouldn't get a flu vaccination

Most adults can have the injected flu vaccine, but you should avoid it if you have had a serious allergic reaction to a flu vaccine in the past. If you are uncertain whether you should avoid it due to a medical condition, you should speak to your GP.

You may be at risk of an allergic reaction to the flu vaccine injection if you have an egg allergy. This is because some flu vaccines are made using eggs. Ask a GP or pharmacist for a low-egg or egg-free vaccine.

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

## Agreeing to be vaccinated

It's important that as many health and social care workers and carers as possible get the vaccine – it protects you, your family, and the people you care for from the flu.

