

**Flu and
COVID-19
vaccines**

Important information

Help protect yourself
this winter



Please read this leaflet before your appointment



What are flu and COVID-19?



Flu and COVID-19 are very infectious respiratory viruses. They can be serious, even if you're healthy. The viruses spread through the air when people cough or sneeze, or when they touch surfaces where the virus has landed then touch their eyes, nose or mouth.

Flu and COVID-19 have similar symptoms that may include:

- a cough
- sneezing
- a stuffy or runny nose
- a sore throat
- headaches
- muscle aches
- breathlessness, tight chest or wheezing
- a high temperature (37.8° or higher) or chills
- feeling generally unwell
- loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste.

There are also other symptoms. It is possible to have COVID-19 and not show any symptoms.

For more information, visit www.nhsinform.scot/flu or www.nhsinform.scot/covid19

Who is being offered both of the vaccines?

Following advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), NHS Scotland recommends you have both the flu and COVID-19 vaccines this year if you are:

- aged 50 years or over
- a resident or staff working in a care home for older adults
- a younger adult in long stay nursing and residential care settings
- a frontline health or social care worker
- aged 5 to 49 years with an eligible health condition, including those with poorly controlled asthma
- aged 5 to 49 years and are a household contact of someone with a weakened immune system
- an unpaid carer or a young carer (16 years or over)
- pregnant.

Who is being offered the flu vaccine?

The flu vaccine is also recommended for:

- people aged 16 to 49 years with an eligible health condition, including well controlled asthma
- children aged 6 months to 2 years with an eligible health condition
- all children aged 2 to 5 years (not yet at school)
- all primary and secondary school pupils
- nursery, primary and secondary school teachers and pupil-facing support staff in local authority or independent settings
- prison population, prison officers and support staff who deliver direct front-facing detention services.

Eligible health conditions

People with certain health conditions are more at risk of complications and need extra protection, even if they feel healthy and their condition is mild or well-managed. This includes the following chronic conditions:

- respiratory disease
- heart disease
- kidney disease
- neurological disease
- liver disease.

It also includes people who are diabetic, undergoing chemotherapy treatment or taking medication that reduces immunity.

A full list of eligible conditions is available at **www.nhsinform.scot/wintervaccines**

The benefits of the vaccines

- The vaccines are the best way to help protect you from flu and COVID-19.
- Vaccines can reduce your risk of needing hospital treatment or dying from flu and COVID-19.
- Vaccines boost your immunity. As protection reduces over time, it is important to have the vaccines when you are offered them.

How do the vaccines work?

Vaccines work by helping the body's immune system to make antibodies (substances that fight off infection). The vaccines cannot give you flu or COVID-19. If you come into contact with the infection, the antibodies recognise it and help protect you.

The vaccines help to build up your immunity to flu and COVID-19 viruses that may be circulating this year, so your body can fight them off more easily if they affect you. If you do get flu or COVID-19, having the vaccine can make the symptoms milder.

A variety of vaccines are available and you will be offered the most suitable ones for your condition or age.

Are the vaccines safe?

All medicines, including vaccines, are tested for safety and effectiveness before they're allowed to be used. Their safety continues to be checked while in use.

It is safe to get the flu and COVID-19 vaccines at the same time.

People taking medication to thin the blood, such as warfarin, can safely get the vaccines as long as their treatment is stable. You should let your vaccinator know what medication you are on.

People with bleeding disorders should consult their specialist or their individual care plan for advice on vaccination.

People with a history of a serious allergic reaction to food, an identified drug or vaccine or an insect sting can get any of the vaccines, if they are known not to be allergic to any component of the vaccine.

For more information on vaccine ingredients, and links to the product information leaflets, visit

www.nhsinform.scot/wintervaccinesleaflets

or call **0800 030 8013**.

How to prepare for vaccination

The flu and COVID-19 vaccines are usually given as injections in the upper arm. On the day of vaccination, wear practical clothing so it's easy to access your upper arms up to your shoulder.

Speak to the person giving you your vaccines, if you have any questions or concerns. If you have a fear of needles or feel anxious, they will be understanding and can support you.

What if I am ill on the day?

You should still go for your vaccines if you have a minor illness without a fever.

If you feel very unwell, your vaccines may be postponed until you have fully recovered. You can rearrange your appointment.

I've had flu and/or COVID-19 before – should I still get the vaccines?

Even if you've already had flu and/or COVID-19, you could still get it again.

The vaccines will reduce your risk of getting the viruses again. If you do get the viruses again, the vaccines can reduce how serious the symptoms will be.

If you have recently had a confirmed COVID-19 infection, you should wait 4 weeks from the date of the test or first symptoms (whichever is earlier) to get the COVID-19 vaccine.

Common side effects of both vaccines

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects. It's normal to experience side effects after a vaccine. It shows the vaccines are teaching your body's immune system how to protect itself from the disease. However, not everyone gets side effects. Most side effects are mild and normally last only a day or two.

Very common side effects in the first day or two include:

- having a painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm where you had your injection
- feeling tired
- headache, aches and chills
- diarrhoea, nausea and vomiting
- mild flu-like symptoms.

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

These common side effects are much less serious than complications associated with flu or COVID-19, and they usually go away within a few days.

Fever after the vaccine

It's quite common to develop a fever (temperature above 37.8°C) after vaccination. This normally happens within 48 hours of the vaccination and usually goes away within 48 hours. This is an expected reaction.

If the fever starts more than 48 hours after the vaccination, or lasts longer than 48 hours, you should seek medical advice as you may have COVID-19 or another infection.

Less common side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine

An uncommon side effect of the COVID-19 vaccine is swollen glands in the armpit or neck on the same side as the arm where you had the vaccine. This can last for around 10 days, but if it lasts longer see your health professional. If you are due for breast screening (a mammogram) a few weeks after the vaccine, tell them you have had the COVID-19 vaccine when you attend.

Heart inflammation

Worldwide, there have also been recent, rare cases of inflammation of the heart (called myocarditis or pericarditis) reported after COVID-19 vaccines. However, it is not yet clear that these have been caused by the vaccines.

Most of these cases have been in younger men and usually happen a few days after vaccination. Most of these people recovered and felt better following rest and simple treatments. Longer-term follow-up is ongoing in the UK and elsewhere to better understand this reaction. You should seek medical advice urgently if you experience:

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

What should I do if I am concerned about my side effects?

Side effects normally last only a day or two. If your side effects seem to get worse or if you are concerned, call **NHS24** free on **111**. If you do seek advice from a health professional, make sure you tell them about your vaccination so that they can assess you properly.

Even if you've had side effects after a previous dose, NHS Scotland recommends you get all the doses you are eligible for, unless your side effect was severe or you have been advised not to by your health professional. You should discuss this with your health professional.

Reporting side effects

You can report suspected side effects of vaccines and medicines through the Yellow Card Scheme at **www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard**, using the Yellow Card app, or by calling **0800 731 6789**.

This information is a guide only. Always get medical advice from **NHS24** free on **111** if you're worried about your health.



Scan here to go to the online Yellow Card Scheme.

Are there any reasons I should not get the vaccines?

The vaccines should not be given to people who have had a confirmed severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to:

- any of the vaccine ingredients
- a previous dose of the same vaccine.

It's important that you tell the person giving you the vaccines if you've ever had a severe allergic reaction.

People with a history of a serious allergic reaction to food, an identified drug or vaccine or an insect sting can get any of the vaccines, as long as they are known not to be allergic to any component of a vaccine. A variety of vaccines are available and you will be offered the most suitable ones for you.

COVID-19 vaccines do not contain any animal products or egg. Some flu vaccines are made using eggs. You may be at risk of an allergic reaction to the flu vaccine if you have an egg allergy. Alternative flu vaccines are available.

For more information on vaccine ingredients, and links to the product information leaflets, visit or call



www.nhsinform.scot/wintervaccinesleaflets



0800 030 8013

How to get your vaccines

NHS Scotland will confirm what vaccines you are eligible for and when it's your turn to get your flu and/or COVID-19 vaccines.

Booking your appointment online

If you are eligible, you can book or rearrange your appointment at **www.nhsinform.scot/wintervaccines**



Scan here to go to the online booking portal.

View our video guides on how to use the portal at **www.nhsinform.scot/wintervaccines**



NHS Scotland strongly recommends you get your vaccines as soon as they are offered to you



Translations



Easy read



BSL



Audio



Large print



Braille

For more information, including other formats and translation support:



www.nhsinform.scot/wintervaccines



0800 030 8013



phs.otherformats@phs.scot

Information correct at time of publication. Please visit www.nhsinform.scot/wintervaccines for the latest information.

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www.nhsinform.scot/data-protection
www.informationgovernance.scot.nhs.uk/use-of-your-immunisation-data/

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