

# Children's flu vaccine

The children's flu vaccine helps protect against flu. It's offered to children aged 2 to 3 years, school-aged children (Reception to Year 11) and children with certain long-term health conditions.

This page is about the flu vaccine for children. There's separate information about the flu vaccine for adults and the flu jab in pregnancy.

## Why children are offered the flu vaccine

Flu can be very unpleasant for children and can sometimes cause serious problems, such as pneumonia.

Each winter in the UK, thousands of children who do not have a health condition need hospital care because of flu.

Children can catch and spread flu easily. Vaccinating them also helps protect others who are at higher risk of getting seriously ill from flu, such as babies, anyone who's pregnant and older people.

## Who should have the children's flu vaccine

The children's flu vaccine is offered on the NHS every year in autumn or early winter.

It's recommended for:

- children aged 2 or 3 years on 31 August 2025 (born between 1 September 2021 and 31 August 2023)
- children aged 4 years who have not started school yet
- school-aged children (Reception to Year 11)
- children aged 6 months to 17 years with certain long-term health conditions

If your child is 17 years old and over, and does not have a long-term health condition, they are not eligible for the flu vaccine.

### [Health conditions that mean your child is eligible for the children's flu vaccine](#)

It's important for children with certain long-term health conditions to have the flu vaccine every year.

This includes children aged 6 months to 17 years who have:

- conditions that affect their breathing, such as asthma (needing a steroid inhaler or tablets) or cystic fibrosis
- had a lung or airways infection in the past that meant they needed to stay overnight in hospital
- serious heart conditions
- kidney or liver disease
- some conditions that affect their brain or nerves, such as cerebral palsy
- diabetes
- a weakened immune system due to a condition or treatment, such as HIV or AIDS, chemotherapy or steroid medicine
- problems with their spleen, such as sickle cell disease, or if they've had their spleen removed
- a learning disability

When your child turns 18, they will be eligible for the injected flu vaccine for adults.

If your child has a health condition and you're not sure if they're eligible for the flu vaccine, speak to their GP surgery or specialist.

# How to get the children's flu vaccine

There are different ways to get the children's flu vaccine.

## [Children aged 2 or 3 years on 31 August 2025](#)

To get a flu vaccine for a child aged 2 or 3 years old, you can:

- contact their GP surgery to book an appointment
- book a free NHS flu vaccination at a pharmacy online or in the NHS App
- find a pharmacy that offers free NHS flu vaccination where your child can get vaccinated without an appointment (walk-in)

## [Children aged 4 years who have not started school](#)

If your child is 4 years old but has not started school yet, they can get vaccinated at either:

- a community clinic – if they turned 4 years old on or before 31 August 2025
- their GP surgery or a pharmacy that offers flu vaccination – if they turned 4 years old after 31 August 2025

## [School-aged children \(Reception to Year 11\)](#)

Most school-aged children (Reception to Year 11) get their flu vaccine at school.

You should get an invitation from your child's school or the School Age Immunisation Service to get their vaccine, usually during the autumn term.

If your child misses their vaccination at school or if they are home educated (home-schooled), they should be offered a flu vaccine at a community clinic.

## [Children with certain long-term health conditions](#)

Children with certain long-term health conditions that put them at higher risk from flu can get a flu vaccine from their:

- school (if they're in Reception to Year 11)
- GP surgery

If your child is in Reception to Year 11, they should get an invitation from their school or the School Age Immunisation Service to have the vaccine, usually during the autumn term.

If your child is not in school or you want to vaccinate your child earlier than when it's offered at school, contact their GP surgery in autumn or early winter to book an appointment.

# Who cannot have the children's flu vaccine

Most children who are eligible for a flu vaccine can have the nasal spray.

But some children may be offered the injected flu vaccine instead if they:

- are under 2 years of age
- have had a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to a previous dose of the nasal spray vaccine
- have had a serious allergic reaction to an ingredient in the nasal spray vaccine, including gelatine, neomycin or gentamicin

- have a severe egg allergy that's needed intensive care hospital treatment
- have a severely weakened immune system, or live with someone who has a severely weakened immune system (for example, someone who has had a bone marrow transplant)
- have asthma that's being treated with long-term steroid tablets or has needed intensive care treatment in hospital
- have had a flare-up of asthma symptoms in the past 72 hours, including wheezing or needing to use a reliever inhaler more than usual
- are having salicylate therapy

If you think your child may need the injected flu vaccine you can speak to your GP, practice nurse or the school immunisation team.

## Getting vaccinated if your child is unwell

If your child has a high temperature, wait until they're feeling better before having the flu vaccine.

If they have a very blocked or runny nose, they may have to wait to get the nasal spray vaccine until they're feeling better, or they may be offered an injected flu vaccine instead.

## Children's flu vaccine ingredients

Most children are offered the nasal spray flu vaccine. It is the preferred vaccine for children aged 2 to 16 years (as well as children aged 17 who have certain long-term health conditions).

You can check the ingredients in the patient leaflet:

Fluenz nasal spray flu vaccine patient leaflet (Electronic Medicines Compendium website)

The nasal spray vaccine contains a small amount of gelatine from pigs (porcine gelatine).

A flu vaccine injection is available that does not contain gelatine. If you do not want your child to have the nasal spray vaccine, speak to the person vaccinating your child or ask for the flu vaccine injection on the school consent form.

Children who cannot have the nasal spray vaccine and children under the age of 2 years will also be offered a flu vaccine injection.

You can check the flu vaccine injection ingredients in the patient leaflet:

Cell-based influenza vaccine patient leaflet (Electronic Medicines Compendium website)

## How the children's flu vaccine is given

The children's flu vaccine is usually given as a quick and painless nasal spray in each nostril.

Children who cannot have the nasal spray vaccine will get a different flu vaccine, given as an injection into the upper arm or thigh.

Some children with certain long-term health conditions who have not had a flu vaccine before might need to have a 2nd dose 4 weeks later.

## Having the children's flu vaccine at the same time as other vaccines

Children can get the flu vaccine at the same time as other vaccines.

# Side effects of the children's flu vaccine

The most common side effects of the children's flu vaccine are mild and get better in 1 to 2 days.

Side effects of the nasal spray flu vaccine can include:

- a blocked or runny nose
- loss of appetite
- feeling tired
- a headache

Side effects of the flu vaccine injection can include:

- pain or soreness where the injection was given
- a slightly raised temperature
- an aching body

More serious side effects such as a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) are very rare. The person who vaccinates your child will be trained to deal with allergic reactions and treat them immediately.

You cannot get flu from any of the flu vaccines.

## More about vaccine safety

Find out more about why vaccinations are important and the safest way to protect yourself

# How well the children's flu vaccine works and how long it lasts

The children's flu vaccine aims to protect children against the most common types of flu viruses.

There's still a chance your child might get flu after getting vaccinated, but they're less likely to get seriously ill or need to go to hospital.

The vaccine usually takes up to 14 days to work.

Protection from the flu vaccine goes down over time and the types of flu the vaccine protects against are updated each year. This is why it's important to get the flu vaccine every year.