

How **effective** is it?

Flu vaccinations are pretty effective. There are many different types of flu and the vaccine will protect against the most common ones. A small number of people may get the flu even after vaccination, but it is likely to be a milder dose than if they had not been vaccinated.

Flu vaccinations only protect against flu. There are many other viruses around every winter which cause flu-like symptoms, but these are usually not as serious as the flu.

Does **the vaccine** have side effects?

Flu vaccinations are very safe. You may get some soreness where the vaccine was injected. Less often, people get a slight temperature and aching muscles for a couple of days after being vaccinated. Other reactions are very rare.

Is there anyone who **should not be vaccinated?**

You should not be vaccinated if you have a serious allergy to hens' eggs. Vaccination is also not advised if you are pregnant. If in doubt ask your doctor.

How do I get the vaccine?

Simply contact your GP to make an appointment for the flu jab or to find out if a flu clinic will be held in your practice.

For more **information** about the flu vaccine:

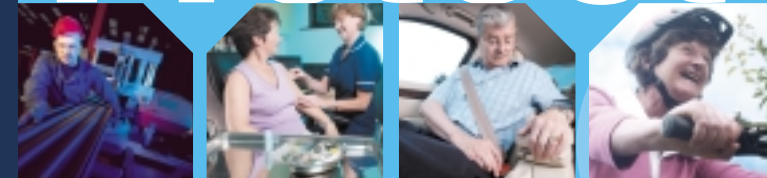
Talk to your GP, practice nurse, district nurse or pharmacist.

Alternative formats and translations in a range of minority ethnic languages are available. For further details contact the Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland.



The Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland
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Protect



yourself

Catch the vaccine not the flu



08/03

What is flu?

People sometimes call a bad cold the flu, but really having flu is much worse.

Flu is a highly infectious disease caused by a virus. Symptoms include fever, chills, headache, aching muscles, cough and sore throat - and because flu is a virus antibiotics won't help.

Every winter the flu comes around, but the virus is always changing. Even if you've had flu or the vaccine last year it won't protect you this year.

How serious is flu?

At best it's a nasty experience, even for people who are usually fit and healthy. At worst it can lead to more serious illnesses such as bronchitis and pneumonia which may need hospital treatment.

So don't take a chance - make sure you don't get the flu by getting the flu vaccine.

Who should get the flu vaccine?

Everyone aged 65 and over, even if you feel fit and healthy at the moment.

Whatever your age, you should get vaccinated if you have one of the following serious medical conditions:

- a chronic heart or chest condition such as asthma;
- diabetes;
- chronic kidney disease;
- lowered immunity due to disease or treatment such as steroids or cancer therapy;
- any other serious medical condition - check with your doctor if you are unsure.

Anyone living in a residential or nursing home should be vaccinated because flu can be spread rapidly.

Can the flu vaccine give you flu?

NO! The vaccine does not contain a live virus, so it cannot cause flu.

When is the best time to be vaccinated?

It is important that you get your flu vaccination in October or early November to be ready to fight off infection. Don't wait until there is an outbreak of flu. By that time it will be too late.

How does the vaccine work?

About a week to ten days after you get the vaccine your body makes antibodies to the vaccine viruses. These antibodies help to protect you against any similar viruses you then come into contact with. The protection lasts for about a year.