

Can the vaccine cause flu?

No. The viruses in the vaccine are inactivated (killed) and cannot cause flu. Some people may experience mild flu-like symptoms for up to 48 hours as their immune system responds to the vaccine, but this is not flu.

Is there anybody who should not be vaccinated?

The flu vaccine should not be given to those who have had an anaphylactic reaction to a previous dose, or any part, of the vaccine.

Flu vaccines are prepared in hens' eggs so they should not be given to anyone with a known serious anaphylactic reaction to egg products.

If a person is ill with a fever, the vaccination should be delayed until they have recovered.

When should I have the flu vaccine?

It is important that you get your seasonal flu vaccination in October or early November to be ready to fight off infection. The earlier you get the vaccine, the sooner you will develop protection. You need to get a new dose of the vaccine every year.

Where do I get the vaccine?

If you work in a trust, you should contact your occupational health department for more information. If you work in primary healthcare or social care, you should contact your employer.

No matter where you are working, if you are already in an 'at-risk' group because of your own health status, your GP should get in contact to offer you the seasonal flu vaccine.

You will be invited to attend for swine flu vaccination when it is available.

For more information on flu vaccinations visit:

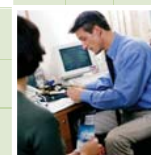
www.dhsspsni.org.uk

www.nidirect.gov.uk

www.publichealth.hscni.net

www.dh.gov.uk/en/PublicHealth/HealthProtection/Immunisation/Greenbook/DH_4097254

Seasonal flu protection for **health** and **social care** workers



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Catch the vaccine not the flu

Why should health and social care workers get the seasonal flu vaccine?

Vaccinating health and social care workers aims to reduce the spread of seasonal flu in health and social care settings.

This helps to:

- protect patients and service users, particularly those most at risk from flu, ie over 65s or those with a serious medical condition;
- protect other health and social care staff;
- make sure health and social care services are effective and efficient.

Which health and social care workers should have the seasonal flu vaccine?

All health and social care staff who are directly involved in caring for patients in:

- general medical and dental practice;
- hospitals;
- residential care homes.

This includes:

- medical staff;
- nursing staff;
- staff in allied health professions (AHP);
- ambulance drivers;
- care staff.

See the 'Green book' for a list of eligible staff (website is listed on the back cover).

Generally the vaccine is not advised for staff who are not directly involved in patient care. However, in some cases, an employer may offer the vaccine to these staff.

How is swine flu different from seasonal flu?

Swine flu is a completely new virus against which very few people are likely to have immunity. It can occur at any time of the year, may affect more people than seasonal flu, and can be more serious.

A vaccine to protect against swine flu will be available later in the winter and the people likely to need it most will be offered it first. Frontline health and social care workers will be prioritised to receive the vaccine at the same time as the first clinical risk group. These staff are at increased risk of infection and of transmitting swine flu to susceptible patients.

The swine flu vaccine will not protect against seasonal flu, therefore it is still important that you get the seasonal flu vaccine.

How does the vaccine work?

About a week to 10 days after you get the seasonal flu vaccine, your body makes antibodies to the vaccine virus. These

antibodies help to protect you against any similar viruses you then come into contact with. The protection lasts for about a year.

The swine flu vaccine works in a similar way. Because swine flu is a new virus and your body will never have come into contact with it before, you will need two injections to provide full protection.

How effective is the vaccine?

The seasonal flu vaccine gives between 70% and 80% protection against viruses that are a close match to the vaccine. There are many other viruses around every winter that cause flu-like symptoms, but these are usually not as serious as flu.

A small number of people may get seasonal flu even after vaccination, but it is likely to be a milder dose than if they had not been vaccinated.

The seasonal flu vaccine does not protect against swine flu.

Should I expect a reaction to the vaccination?

After vaccination, your arm may be a bit sore for a day or two where you had the injection. Some people get a slight temperature and aching muscles for a couple of days. Other reactions are very rare.