

Influenza or 'flu' is an acute viral infection which most often occurs in winter in the UK. It is highly infectious and it can quickly spread from person to person affecting whole communities. Flu is easily transmitted by droplets, small-particle aerosols and by hand to mouth/eye contamination from a contaminated surface or the respiratory secretions of an infected person.

Flu affects the lungs and airways, symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny/stuffy nose, headache, aching in the joints and muscles and extreme fatigue. Gastrointestinal symptoms can also occur including diarrhoea and vomiting. Flu can also exacerbate underlying chronic health conditions.

For most healthy individuals, flu is a self-limiting illness with resolution within 7 days. Some individuals are identified to be more at risk of complications such as bronchitis and pneumonia which can lead to death. The annual vaccination programme to protect those at a higher risk of complications has now commenced, if you or a member of your family is included in the list below please speak to your GP or your employer about vaccination.

Older people/ the very young

Pregnant women – flu complications include prematurity and increased risk of complications for mother

Underlying disease, such as COPD, cardiac/chronic kidney disease and diabetes

Immunosuppressed

Frontline Health or social care workers

This year the flu vaccination is also recommended if you are:

The main carer of an older or disabled person

A household contact of someone on the shielded patients list for COVID-19

A child aged 2 to 11 years old on 31 August 2020

Flu immunisation is one of the most effective interventions to reduce harm from flu and pressures on health and social care services during the winter. Vaccination of health and social care workers protects them and also reduces the risk of spreading flu to their patients, service users, colleagues and family members.

By preventing flu infection through vaccination, secondary bacterial infections such as pneumonia are prevented, this reduces the need for antibiotics and helps prevent [antibiotic resistance](#).

For more information please visit;

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/flu-influenza-vaccine/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/pneumococcal-vaccination/>

<https://bradford.connecttosupport.org/media/zjspfkbo/care-setting-letter-august-2020-v2-00000002.pdf>