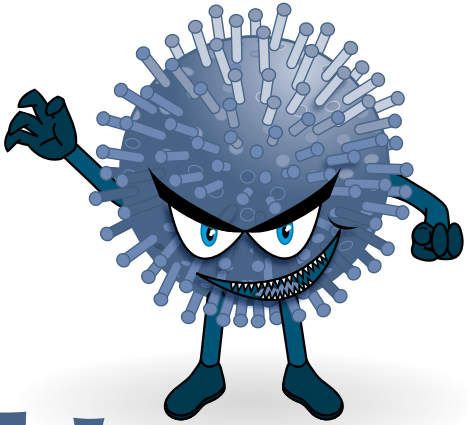




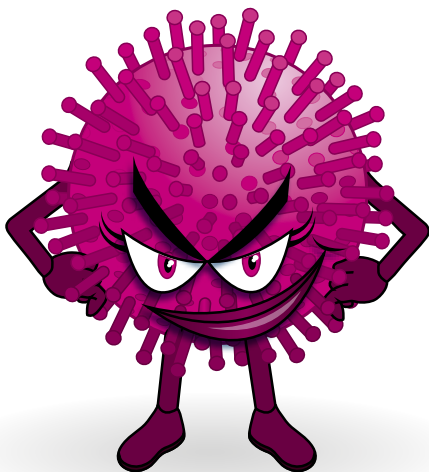
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FLU

IS A KILLER.

**If you are at risk you should
have your free flu vaccination
every year.**



What is flu?

Flu spreads easily and can cause serious illnesses which need to be treated in hospital. It is not the same as a bad cold. Flu can be much worse. It occurs every year, usually in winter.

Flu is caused by viruses which change from one year to the next. Each year new vaccines are produced to try and match them. This gives people the best protection.

How do I know if I have flu and what should I do?

Flu symptoms hit you suddenly and can be severe. They usually include fever, chills, headaches and aching muscles, often with a cough and sore throat.

Flu is caused by viruses and not bacteria, so **antibiotics won't help**. There are some medicines called antivirals that can be given to those most at risk from flu. These may help if taken within 2 days of the start of the illness. If you are at increased risk (see page 4) and think you may have flu, you should talk to your doctor urgently.

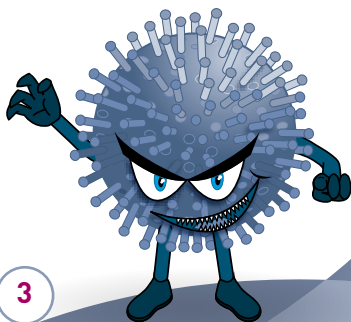
If you get flu and haven't had the vaccination this flu season, you should have it as soon as you are feeling better. This will protect you against other types of flu.

Using a tissue when you sneeze or cough and washing your hands helps to prevent the spread of flu.

What harm can flu do?

Often people who get flu need to stay in bed for a few days, but it can also cause more serious illnesses, such as bronchitis and pneumonia, that may need hospital treatment.

Flu is more serious if you have certain illnesses, or are older. In a normal winter, thousands of people will die from flu related illnesses in the UK.



Am I at greater risk from the effects of flu?

Even if you feel healthy you should have the flu vaccination if you have:

- A heart problem.
- A chest complaint or breathing difficulties, including asthma that requires regular steroid inhalers/ tablets.
- Kidney disease.
- Lowered immunity due to disease or treatment (such as steroid medication or cancer treatment).
- Liver disease.
- Had a stroke or a transient ischaemic attack (TIA).
- Diabetes.
- A neurological condition, for example multiple sclerosis (MS), cerebral palsy or post-polio syndrome.
- A problem with your spleen, for example sickle cell disease, or you have had your spleen removed.

You should also have the flu vaccination if you are:

- Pregnant.
- Aged 65 years or over.
- Living in a residential or nursing home.

Carers

If you care for someone in one of the groups mentioned above, or an older or disabled person, you should have a free flu vaccine. This will help protect the person you care for.

Health and Social Care Workers

If you are a health or social care worker in direct contact with patients or clients your employer is responsible for arranging and paying for your vaccination.

Pregnant women

All pregnant women should have the flu vaccine. If a pregnant woman gets flu her baby is more likely to be born too soon or with a low birth weight, be stillborn or die within their first week.

Vaccination of a pregnant woman provides protection for the woman and her baby during the pregnancy. It also protects the baby against flu in the first 4-6 months of life when it can be very serious.

Children

Children from 6 months of age, with any of the conditions listed, or who have previously been admitted to hospital with a chest infection, should have a flu vaccine. A nasal spray vaccine is available for children from 2 years of age.

I had a flu jab last year. Do I need another jab this year?

Yes, if you are in a risk group for flu you need to be vaccinated every year.

Is there anyone who should not have the vaccination?

There are very few people who cannot have the flu vaccine.

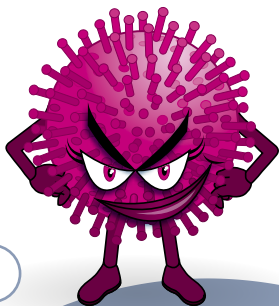
Only people who have previously had a serious allergic reaction to the flu vaccine cannot have any flu vaccination.

Tell the nurse or doctor if you have a serious egg allergy. You can still be vaccinated but they need to know.

The nasal spray flu vaccine should not be given to those who have a weakened immune system, severe asthma or an active wheeze.

If you are unwell with a high temperature, you should delay the vaccination until the temperature has settled.

A runny nose, cough or other minor illness are not reasons to delay the vaccine.



How long will protection last?

Protection starts about a week to ten days after the injection and lasts for up to a year. The vaccine will not protect you against the common cold or other winter illnesses.

Will I get any side effects?

The flu vaccine is very safe. Your arm may be a bit red and sore where you were injected but other reactions are less common. Some people may get a slight temperature, feel tired, have a headache, or aching muscles for one or two days. The nasal spray flu vaccine may also cause a runny or blocked nose.

Other side effects are very rare.

The vaccination is quick and safe and could prevent weeks of serious illness.

Will the Flu Vaccine give me the Flu?

No, the flu vaccine will not give you flu.

Will the flu vaccine protect me completely?

Most people who have the flu vaccine will not get flu this winter. Others may get flu but often with milder symptoms. The vaccine will not protect you against colds and other winter illnesses.

What do I need to do next?

If you are in any of the groups mentioned in this leaflet it is important that you have your flu vaccine. Speak to your GP practice about being vaccinated. You can also get advice from your local pharmacy or NHS Direct Wales.

For best protection have the flu vaccination in the autumn before there are any outbreaks of flu but it can still be given after this. The vaccines are normally available from the end of September.

Where can I get more information?

Visit: <http://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/>
or phone NHS Direct Wales on **0845 46 47**.

You can also speak to your doctor or nurse.

Copies of this leaflet are available by e-mailing hplibrary@wales.nhs.uk or telephoning **0845 606 4050**.

This leaflet is available on the Welsh Government immunisation website at www.wales.gov.uk/immunisation

Any queries about this leaflet can be addressed to:

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