



It's not too early to think about Flu season



Flu is more **serious** than you think



Get ready by reading this information about Flu and finding out why it's important to protect yourself if you have a Long-Term Condition

What is Flu?

Influenza (flu) is a highly infectious illness caused by the flu virus, affecting the airways and lungs. Unlike a cold, flu can start suddenly with fever, muscle aches, headaches, and extreme tiredness.

Know Your Risk

If you have a Long-Term Condition such as Diabetes (Type 1 or 2), COPD, Asthma (requiring regular steroid medication or hospital admission), a heart condition, or reduced immune system, you are at greater risk of serious illness from flu and more likely to experience severe symptoms that may need hospitalisation.

How Can I Protect Myself?

Get Vaccinated: The flu vaccine is the best protection. It helps your immune system fight flu infections and is free of charge for eligible patients. You can get the vaccine at your GP practice or most pharmacies.

The FAQs about Flu and the vaccine

- **Is my mild or well-managed condition a risk?** Yes, flu can still pose a risk even if your condition is mild or well-managed.
- **Can the flu vaccine injection give me the flu?** No, it contains no live viruses. You may experience mild side effects such as soreness, redness, swelling, headaches, muscle pains, or tiredness, but these usually last only a few days. Severe allergic reactions are extremely rare.
- **Can flu cause serious illness?** Yes, complications can include pneumonia, bronchitis, and rarely, encephalitis (brain inflammation).

- **How effective is the vaccine?** The vaccine greatly reduces the risk of serious illness and spreading the flu. Some vaccinated individuals might still get flu, but symptoms are usually milder.
- **Do I have to pay for the vaccine?** No, it's free for eligible patients including those who:
 - ☐ are 65 and older
 - ☐ have certain health conditions
 - ☐ are pregnant
 - ☐ are in long-stay residential care
 - ☐ receive a carer's allowance, or are the main carer for an older or disabled person who may be at risk if you get sick
 - ☐ live with someone who is more likely to get a severe infection due to a weakened immune system
 - ☐ children aged 2 to 3 years, school-aged children (Reception to Year 11) and children with certain long-term health conditions

Visit www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/child-flu-vaccine/ for children and www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/flu-vaccine/ for adults for more information on eligibility.

- **Do I need to get vaccinated every year?** Yes, flu viruses change each year, so an annual vaccine is needed to match new strains.
- **How do children get vaccinated?** Children aged from 2 years old will usually be offered the vaccine as a nasal spray (up their nose), but children with certain health conditions may be advised to have the injectable vaccine. School age children will be offered the nasal vaccine in school.

When and Where to Get Vaccinated

- **GP Practices:** Book specific clinics, some available on Saturdays.
- **Local Pharmacies:** Usually offer the vaccine from October.
- **Walk-in Clinics:** Available without appointments, check local advertisements.
- **In an education setting:** Immunisation teams visit every school from September and hold community clinics throughout flu season for those in reception up to year 11. Check with your school vaccination team to see when clinics will be held in your area. Tel: 01724 514800 Email: lincs@v-uk.co.uk

Even if flu season has started, it's still beneficial to get vaccinated. If you've already had flu, vaccination still offers protection against other flu viruses circulating that season.

Tip: Ask about the Pneumococcal Vaccine

For those with long-term medical conditions, ask your GP or nurse about the pneumococcal vaccine to protect against pneumonia. Typically, it's a one-time vaccine and might be available on the same day as your flu jab.

Take Action Now

Protect yourself this flu season by getting vaccinated. Keep as healthy as you can and avoid nasty complications by staying ahead of the flu.