



Flu Vaccine

for Children aged 2-17
2026/27



www.hse.ie/flu

Flu Vaccine for children aged 2-17

This flu season 2026/27, all children aged 2-17 years will be offered the nasal spray flu vaccine free of charge.

This leaflet explains why it is important that children get the flu vaccine. It tells you where your child can get the flu vaccine and important information about the vaccine.

Please read carefully.

What is flu?

Influenza (flu) is a very infectious illness caused by the flu virus. Flu spreads easily and infects both children and adults.

Flu circulates in the community during the flu season. The flu season usually starts at the beginning of October and lasts until the end of April.

How does flu affect children?

Children are more likely than adults to get severe complications of flu.

Children who are sick with flu miss days in crèche, childcare and school. They also miss out on their usual activities such as hobbies and sports.

Over the last 10 years in Ireland:

- Over **10,000** children were hospitalised because of flu
- Over **200** needed intensive care (ICU)
- Sadly **22** children died

Can flu cause serious illness in children?

Yes. Complications of flu include pneumonia, bronchitis, and, on rare occasions, inflammation of the brain (encephalitis).

Children with chronic health conditions are most at risk of the serious complications of flu.

How will the flu vaccine protect my child?

The flu vaccine helps your child's immune system to produce antibodies (proteins that fight infection).

If your child has had the flu vaccine and they come into contact with the flu virus, the vaccine can stop them from getting sick.

If my child gets the flu vaccine, are other people protected?

If your child gets the flu vaccine, it reduces the spread of flu to others. This helps protect people around them from flu, for example their brothers and sisters, parents and grandparents.

If enough children are vaccinated fewer people will get flu or will need treatment in hospital. This is very important for our population's health and our health services, especially during the winter.

What is the name of the flu vaccine for children?

The flu vaccine for children is called Fluenz manufactured by AstraZeneca.

The flu vaccine for children has been given to children in the UK since 2013 and Ireland since 2020.

How is the vaccine given?

Your vaccinator will give the vaccine as a **spray up your child's nose** (nasal vaccine). They will spray once in each nostril. There is no need for an injection and it's pain free.

Your child can breathe normally while getting the vaccine. There is no need to take a deep breath or sniff.

Some children who have chronic health conditions like chronic heart or lung conditions may need two doses, given four weeks apart.

Are there any children who should not get the nasal flu vaccine?

A very small number of children will not be able to get the nasal flu vaccine because of medical reasons.

Children or young people should **not** get the vaccine if they:

- have had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of the flu vaccine or any of its ingredients
- have severe asthma or if they have been wheezy or needed their inhaler more than usual in the three days before the vaccination. If your child has severe asthma (for example if they have regularly needed oral (by mouth) steroids or have needed to go to ICU before because of asthma) you should discuss the nasal flu vaccine with their

specialist team/respiratory doctor or nurse

- are taking medicines called salicylates, which include Aspirin
- have a severely weakened immune system because of certain medical conditions or treatments
- are living with someone who has a severely weakened immune system (for example, a person who recently had a bone marrow transplant)
- have taken antiviral medication for flu within the previous 48 hours
- have a condition which means they have a leak of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) - the fluid that surrounds the brain and spinal cord
- are pregnant or breastfeeding.

Talk to your doctor before getting the nasal flu vaccine for your child if they have had a cochlear implant, your child has a severe neutropoenia (low levels of a type of white blood cell) or are taking two medicines called combination checkpoint inhibitors (for example, ipilimumab plus nivolumab) which are used to treat cancer.

Some children with inherited metabolic disorders may not be able to get the nasal flu vaccine. If your child has an inherited metabolic disorder talk to their doctor about whether your child should get the nasal flu vaccine.

If your child cannot get the flu vaccine using a nasal spray (nose spray), your GP (Doctor) or pharmacist will talk to you about giving your child a different flu vaccine, which is given by injection.

Is the nasal flu vaccine a live vaccine?

Yes, the nasal flu vaccine is a live vaccine. This means that it contains a very weakened form of the flu virus which does not spread or cause flu infection. Getting the flu vaccine can stop your child from getting the flu and gives them the best available protection from the complications of flu infection.

Can the nasal flu vaccine give you the flu?

No. The nasal flu vaccine will not give your child the flu.

Because the nasal flu vaccine is a live vaccine, children may release a tiny amount of the weakened vaccine virus for a few days. This vaccine virus is much weaker than the regular flu virus. It will not cause your child to get the flu. Spread of the weakened vaccine virus to others is extremely rare and has not been shown to cause flu illness in others.

Are there any side effects of the nasal flu vaccine?

The flu vaccine is a very safe vaccine.

The most common side effects are mild. They include a runny or blocked nose, headache and muscle aches. Some children get a fever (temperature) after the vaccine, but it is usually mild and goes away on its own.

Serious side effects such as a severe allergic reaction are very rare.

What if my child doesn't feel well after vaccination?

If your child has a fever (temperature) or a headache, you can give them paracetamol or ibuprofen. Do not give Aspirin or medicines called salicylates to children, unless they have been prescribed by a doctor. This is especially important in the 4 weeks after getting the vaccine.

Talk to your GP (Doctor) or pharmacist if your child is very unwell after the vaccine, as it may be for some other reason.

My child is allergic to eggs. Can they get the nasal flu vaccine?

Yes. Most children with an egg allergy can have a flu vaccine. Talk to your GP (Doctor), pharmacist or vaccinator.

My child has asthma. Can they get the nasal flu vaccine?

Yes. Most children with asthma can get the flu vaccine.

Your child should not get the nasal flu vaccine if they have severe asthma or if they have been wheezy or needed their inhaler more than usual in the 3 days before the vaccination.

If your child has regularly needed oral steroids or previously needed to go to ICU for care for their asthma, you should discuss the nasal flu vaccine with their specialist team/respiratory doctor or nurse.

Talk to your GP (Doctor) or pharmacist.

My child is under 2 years of age; can they get the nasal flu vaccine?

No. The nasal flu vaccine can only be given to children from their second birthday.

If your child has a chronic health condition which means that they are at risk from flu, they can get a different flu vaccine which is given by injection.

Talk to your GP (Doctor) or pharmacist.

My child is 18 years or older; can they get the nasal flu vaccine?

No. If your child has a chronic health condition which means that they are at higher risk from flu, they can get a different flu vaccine which is given by injection.

Talk to your GP (Doctor) or pharmacist

Where can I get the nasal flu vaccine for my child?

You can get the nasal flu vaccine from your GP (Doctor) or pharmacist.

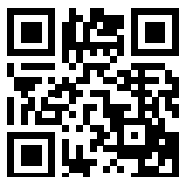
Some children may be offered the nasal flu vaccine in school, by HSE teams, GP's or Pharmacists.

What does the nasal flu vaccine cost?

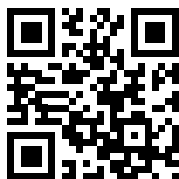
If your child is aged 2-17 years, the vaccine and the consultation with your GP (Doctor) or pharmacist are free.

For more information see:

www.hse.ie/flu



You can also find a link to the patient information leaflet for the vaccine at **www.hpra.ie**. Search for Fluenz to read the relevant patient information leaflet.



Reporting side effects

If you think, you have had a side effect after receiving a vaccine, you can report it to the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) at www.hpra.ie. Your doctor, nurse, pharmacist or a family member can also report the side effect to the HPRA.



Protect yourself.
Protect others.

National Immunisation Office
www.hse.ie/flu



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