



Flu Vaccine

Information for
People at Risk



www.hse.ie/flu

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2026-2027

About this leaflet

This leaflet tells you about the seasonal flu vaccine. It focuses on who should get the vaccine, when and how to get it, as well as other useful information.

Please read carefully.

What is seasonal influenza (flu)?

Influenza (flu) is a very infectious illness caused by the flu virus. The virus infects the airways and the lungs.

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.

Can flu cause serious illness?

Yes, the flu can cause serious illness and life-threatening complications including pneumonia, bronchitis and, on rare occasions, inflammation of the brain (encephalitis).

Flu also can make chronic health problems worse.

Some people are more at risk of these serious complications including people aged 60 and older, pregnant women, and people with an underlying health condition such as diabetes, chronic lung disease or a weak immune system.

What is the difference between a cold and the flu?

A cold usually comes on gradually with a sore throat and a blocked or runny nose and its symptoms are usually mild.

Flu symptoms start suddenly with fever, muscle aches, headaches and extreme tiredness (fatigue).

What is the flu vaccine?

A vaccine is a product that helps the body's immune system (defence system) to fight against infections. Each year the flu viruses change, so each year the flu vaccine changes to provide protection against the strains of flu virus that are expected to spread during the flu season.

How does the flu vaccine work?

The flu vaccine helps your immune system to produce antibodies (proteins that fight infection). If you have had the flu vaccine and you come into contact with the flu virus, the vaccine can stop you from getting sick.

Who should get the flu vaccine

We recommend the flu vaccine for:

- People aged 60 years and over
- Children aged 2-17 years (please read HSE leaflet on flu vaccine for children)
- Pregnant women (please read HSE leaflet on flu vaccine for pregnancy)
- People (adults and children) with long-term medical conditions that increase the risk of complications from flu such as diabetes, chronic heart conditions, liver conditions, kidney conditions and chronic lung disease including COPD, or neurological diseases
- People with cancer
- Children on long-term aspirin treatment
- People whose immune system is impaired due to disease or treatment
- People who are obese who have a body mass index (BMI) of 40 and over

- People with Down syndrome and children with moderate to severe neurodevelopmental disorders
- Residents of nursing homes and other long-stay institutions
- Healthcare workers
- Carers
- People who live in the same house as someone who is at risk of flu because of a medical condition
- People with regular close contact with poultry, water fowl or pigs.

When should I get the flu vaccine?

You should get your flu vaccine every year as soon as it is available. By getting the flu vaccine at the start of the flu season, before flu begins to spread, you can protect yourself and you can help to stop the spread of flu infection.

Why do I need the flu vaccine every year?

Each year the circulating flu viruses change, so each year the composition of the flu vaccine changes to provide protection against the strains of flu virus that are expected to spread during the flu season.

What flu vaccines are available this flu season?

The 2026-2027 HSE seasonal flu vaccination programme will offer four vaccines:

- An adjuvanted (enhanced) flu vaccine called **Fluad** supplied by Seqirus for all those aged 65 years and older
- Standard inactivated flu vaccines called **Influvac** supplied by Viatrix, or **Vaxigrip** supplied by Sanofi for:
 - All adults aged 60-64 years
 - Children aged 6 months to less than 2 years and adults aged 18-59 years with a condition that increases the risk of complications from flu
- A nasal spray influenza vaccine called **Fluenz** supplied by AstraZeneca for all children aged 2-17 years.

This leaflet provides information on the standard flu vaccines and the enhanced flu vaccine. For information on the nasal spray flu vaccine (Fluenz) please read HSE leaflet on flu vaccine for children aged 2-17 years.

Why do people aged 60 years and over need the flu vaccine?

People aged 60 years and over are more at risk of severe illness, hospitalisation or death from flu. The flu vaccine gives the best available protection against the serious complications of flu.

What vaccine is recommended for people aged 65 years and older?

The National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC) recommend the adjuvanted (enhanced) flu vaccine for all those aged 65 years and older. This enhanced flu vaccine is called Flud.

Why is the enhanced flu vaccine recommended for everyone aged 65 years and older?

If you are 65 and older you are at higher risk of serious illness from flu. As we get older our immune system may not respond as well to vaccines. The enhanced vaccine is designed to help your immune system respond better to give you stronger protection against flu.

What makes the Flud flu vaccine enhanced?

The enhanced flu vaccine (Flud) is an adjuvanted vaccine.

Adjuvanted vaccines contain an extra ingredient called an 'adjuvant', that increases the immune response, compared with standard vaccines. Adjuvants have been used safely in vaccines for many years.

The adjuvant used in Flud is MF59, which contains squalene, a naturally occurring substance found in humans, plants and animals.

What vaccine is recommended for everyone under 65 years of age?

- All children aged 2 years to 17 years are recommended the nasal flu vaccine (Fluenz), unless there is a reason they cannot have this vaccine.
- The standard inactivated flu vaccine is recommended for everyone else who is recommended a flu vaccine under the age of 65 years.

Why do pregnant women need the flu vaccine?

If you are pregnant you can get seriously unwell with flu infection. Getting the flu vaccine will give you and your baby the best available protection against the serious complications of flu.

If you are pregnant, please read the HSE flu leaflet for pregnant women.

How safe is the flu vaccine?

The flu vaccine is very safe. Flu vaccines have been given for more than 60 years to millions of people worldwide.

What are the side effects of the vaccine?

Common side effects are mild. After the flu vaccine you may get side effects including soreness, redness and swelling where the injection was given. Headaches, muscle pains and tiredness can also develop. These side effects may last for a few days. People who get the enhanced flu vaccine may have more of the mild side effects, such as redness at the injection site, a sore arm, or muscle aches.

For all flu vaccines, serious reactions are very rare; a severe allergic reaction occurs in one in a million people.

Can the flu vaccine give me the flu?

No. The flu vaccine can't give you the flu.

How long does it take the vaccine to work?

The vaccine starts to work within two weeks.

Who should not get the flu vaccine?

You should **not** get the flu vaccine if you have had a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to a previous dose of flu vaccine or any part of the vaccine.

People on combination checkpoint inhibitors (e.g. ipilimumab plus nivolumab), should speak to their treating specialist doctor before getting the flu vaccine.

Some people with a severe type of chemotherapy induced neutropoenia (low levels of a type of white blood cell) may need to wait to have the flu vaccine and should talk to their doctor.

What about people with egg allergy?

Most people with an egg allergy can have a flu vaccine. Talk to your GP (Doctor) or Pharmacist.

When should you delay getting the flu vaccine?

There are very few reasons why getting the flu vaccine should be delayed. You may have to delay getting the flu vaccine if you are unwell – with a high temperature of more than 38°C – until you are better.

Where do I get the flu vaccine if I am in one of the groups for whom the vaccine is recommended?

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

If you are a healthcare worker, your workplace may provide the vaccine at work. Please read the HSE leaflet on the flu vaccine for healthcare workers.

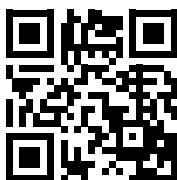
What does the flu vaccine cost?

If the flu vaccine is recommended for you, then the vaccine and the consultation with your GP (Doctor) or Pharmacist are free.

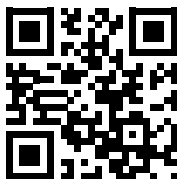
Please make an appointment with your GP (Doctor) or Pharmacist now to get vaccinated and give yourself the best available protection against flu this winter.

For more information see:

www.hse.ie/flu



You can also find a link to the patient information leaflet for the vaccines at www.hpra.ie Search for Influvac, Vaxigrip, Fludac or Fluenz.



Reporting side effects

If you think you or your child 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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