



# HELP BEAT FLU WITH A WEE SCOOSH

Given as a painless  
nose spray

**Flu vaccine for  
primary school pupils**

Public Health  
Scotland 

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## What is flu?

Influenza (flu) is an infectious virus and can be serious, even for healthy children. The flu virus spreads through the air when people cough or sneeze, or touch surfaces where it has landed then touch their eyes, nose or mouth.



**Last winter, 1,026 children and young people under 18 years of age spent time in hospital with flu in Scotland\* – that's roughly the same as 93 football teams.**

## What are the symptoms?

Flu symptoms are worse than a normal cold and can last up to seven days. Symptoms may include:

- a stuffy nose, cough and sore throat
- fever and chills
- aching muscles and joints
- headaches
- extreme tiredness

Flu can be serious, even for healthy children. In some cases, flu can lead to complications, including:

- bronchitis
- pneumonia
- middle-ear infection
- vomiting
- diarrhoea

In the worst cases, flu can lead to disability and even death.

Flu can be even more serious for children with health conditions and can make their condition worse.

**For more information about flu and the symptoms, visit [nhsinform.scot/childflu](https://nhsinform.scot/childflu)**

\*between October 2023 and March 2024

# The child flu vaccine

## Who is being offered the vaccine?

All children and young people aged 2 to 17 years can get the flu vaccine. NHS immunisation teams will offer the vaccine to pupils at school.

Home-educated children and young people not attending mainstream education can also get the flu vaccine.

## How is the vaccine given?

The flu vaccine for children and young people is usually given as a nasal (nose) spray into each nostril. It's quick and painless and there is no need to sniff or inhale. It will just feel like a tickle in the nose.

The vaccine is given once a year, usually between September and December. Flu viruses are constantly changing, so a different vaccine has to be made every year to ensure the best protection against flu. The flu vaccine should help protect most children and young people from 10 to 14 days after they get their vaccination.



**Watch a video on what to expect**



The nasal (nose) spray flu vaccine is the most effective vaccine for children and young people.

**The nasal spray vaccine has been used safely in Scotland's child flu vaccination programme since 2014, with millions of doses given.**

Most children will only need one dose of the flu vaccine. If your child has a health condition that puts them at higher risk of flu and has not had the flu vaccine previously, they may need a second dose to build up their immunity.

## Flu vaccine ingredients

The nasal (nose) spray flu vaccine contains a highly processed form of gelatine (pork gelatine), which is used in many essential medicines. Many faith groups, including Muslim and Jewish communities, have approved the use of vaccines containing gelatine. If you do not accept the use of gelatine in medical products, an alternative injectable vaccine is available. You can request this by ticking the relevant box on the consent form.

For more information on vaccine ingredients, and links to the patient information leaflets, visit [nhsinform.scot/childflu](https://nhsinform.scot/childflu) or call **0800 030 8013**.

## Are there any reasons not to have the nasal spray flu vaccine?

A very small number of children will not be able to get the nasal spray flu vaccine. This includes children who:

- have a serious condition that affects their immune system or are having treatment which weakens it
- live with someone who needs isolation because they have a severely weakened immune system
- are taking regular high doses of oral steroids for asthma control
- have had a severe reaction to a previous dose of the vaccine or its ingredients
- are undergoing salicylate treatment (for example, taking aspirin).

**For a full list of health conditions, visit [nhsinform.scot/childflu](https://nhsinform.scot/childflu)**



If your child has an egg allergy, they can safely have the nasal spray flu vaccine, unless they've had a life-threatening reaction to eggs and spent time in hospital.

## Is the vaccine safe?

All medicines (including vaccines) are tested for safety and effectiveness before they are allowed to be used. Once they are in use, the safety of vaccines continues to be carefully monitored.

## Will the vaccine cause any side effects?

As with all medicines, side effects of the flu vaccine are possible but usually mild. They may include:



headache and  
muscle aches



a runny or  
blocked nose.

Less common side effects include a nosebleed after the nasal spray vaccine.

If your child gets the injectable vaccine, they may experience a painful, heavy feeling or tenderness in the arm.

These side effects usually go away after a couple of days, and you do not need to do anything about them. These side effects are much less serious than developing flu or complications associated with flu.



The flu vaccine is the safest and easiest way to help protect your child against flu. The flu vaccine cannot give your child flu.

## Reporting side effects

You can report suspected side effects of vaccines and medicines through the Yellow Card Scheme at [www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard](http://www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard), by using the Yellow Card app, or by calling **0800 731 6789**.

## What do I do next?

Complete, sign and return your child's consent form to school, even if you do not want your child to be vaccinated. Please make sure you list all medications your child is taking on the consent form.

## What if my child misses their vaccination?

Please contact your local NHS immunisation team (find the number on the letter enclosed) to find out about local arrangements for getting their vaccine at another time.

**This information is a guide only. Always get medical advice from NHS 24 free on 111 if you're worried about your child's health.**



**It's very important that you complete and return your child's consent form as soon as possible.**



For more information,  
visit [nhsinform.scot/childflu](https://nhsinform.scot/childflu)  
or call **0800 030 8013**.

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Translations



Easy read



BSL



Audio



Large print



Braille

For more information, or for translations and other formats:



[www.nhsinform.scot/childflu](http://www.nhsinform.scot/childflu)



0800 030 8013



[phs.otherformats@phs.scot](mailto:phs.otherformats@phs.scot)



Information correct at time of publication.  
Please visit [www.nhsinform.scot/childflu](http://www.nhsinform.scot/childflu)  
for the most up-to-date information.

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[www.nhsinform.scot/confidentiality](http://www.nhsinform.scot/confidentiality)  
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