



# HELP BEAT FLU WITH A WEE SCOOSH

Given as a painless  
nose spray

**Flu vaccine for  
secondary 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 people. 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 and young people. 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 and young people with health conditions and can make their condition worse.

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

\*between October 2023 and March 2024

# The 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?

Most school pupils will be given the flu vaccine as a nasal (nose) spray into each nostril. It's quick and painless and there is no need to sniff or inhale the vaccine. It will just feel like a tickle in the nose.

The vaccine is given to you 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 you from 10 to 14 days after you get your vaccination.



**Watch a video on what to expect**



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

An alternative injectable form of the vaccine is available if you cannot have the nasal spray flu vaccine.

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

## 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, you can ask for the vaccine to be given as an injection in the arm instead. 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://www.nhsinform.scot/childflu) or call **0800 030 8013**.

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

The nasal spray flu vaccine may not be suitable for some pupils, for example:

- If you have severe asthma and regularly need oral steroids for asthma control. Speak to the nurse if you have any questions about this.
- If you have a severely weakened immune system, are getting treatment for cancer or you've had a transplant.
- If you live with someone who needs isolation because they're severely immunosuppressed, meaning they have a very weak immune system.
- If you have had a severe reaction to a previous dose of the vaccine or its ingredients.

The vaccine can be given as an injection in the arm for anyone who cannot have the nasal spray flu vaccine.

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



If you have an egg allergy, you can safely have the nasal spray flu vaccine, unless you'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 you get the injectable vaccine, you may experience a painful, heavy feeling or tenderness in your 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 you against flu. The flu vaccine cannot give you 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**.

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

## What do I do next?

Show your parent or carer this leaflet. Talk to them about getting the flu vaccine. It's a decision you should make together.

You should have been given a consent form with this leaflet, which you and your parent or carer are asked to sign and return to your school even if you're not going to have the vaccine. Please make sure you answer all the questions and list all medications you're taking on the consent form.

If you did not get a consent form, speak to your school as soon as possible.

We recommend you get agreement from your parent or carer, but it is not always necessary. For information on young people's right to consent, visit [nhsinform.scot/vaccineconsentyoungpeople](https://nhsinform.scot/vaccineconsentyoungpeople)

**Scan to find out about vaccine consent for young people**



## What if I miss my vaccination?

You or your parent or carer can contact your local NHS immunisation team (find the number on the letter enclosed) to find out about local arrangements for getting the vaccine at another time.



**It's very important that you complete and return your 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.

You have rights in relation to the access and the use of your personal health information. For more information about your rights or how the NHS uses your personal information in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation visit:  
[www.nhsinform.scot/confidentiality](http://www.nhsinform.scot/confidentiality)  
[www.nhsinform.scot/data-protection](http://www.nhsinform.scot/data-protection)  
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