

FAQs COVID-19 and flu Autumn/Winter campaign 24/25

Flu and COVID-19

What is Influenza (flu)?

Flu is caused by influenza viruses that infect the windpipe upper air ways and lungs which are part of the respiratory system. There are several [symptoms](#) of flu including a sudden high temperature, an aching body and a dry cough. A full list of symptoms is available on the [NHS website](#). It often gets better on its own but can lead to serious illness. It is important to get the flu vaccine ahead of winter to protect yourself and others.

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is an infectious disease that is caused by a particular type of coronavirus that infects the windpipe upper air ways and lungs which are part of the respiratory system. There are a range of [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 including a new continuous cough, shortness of breath and an aching body. The symptoms are very similar to symptoms of other illnesses including flu and a full list of symptoms is available on the [NHS website](#). COVID-19 often gets better on its own but can lead to serious illness. It is important to get the COVID-19 vaccine ahead of winter if you are eligible to protect yourself.

How do I stop flu and COVID-19 spreading?

Flu and COVID-19 are both very infectious, spread by germs from coughs and sneezes. COVID-19 can be spread very easily through close contact with people who have the virus, for example via breathing and speaking. Flu and COVID-19 spread by person to person via small droplets containing the virus being released from an infected person and then picked up by another person by breathing these droplets in or touching surfaces covered in them.

A good way to avoid catching and spreading flu is by getting vaccinated ahead of winter. You can help prevent the spread of flu and COVID-19 by covering your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze and encourage children to do so, washing your hands frequently or using hand gels and cleaning surfaces you use regularly to reduce the risk of picking up the viruses.

What should I do if I think I have flu or COVID-19?

The best way to avoid catching and spreading flu and COVID-19 is by getting vaccinated.

If you think that you have flu or COVID-19 you should:

- try to stay at home
- rest and sleep
- keep warm
- take paracetamol or ibuprofen to lower your temperature and treat aches and pains
- drink plenty of fluids (water is best) to [avoid dehydration](#) (your pee should be light yellow and clear)

If you have symptoms of COVID-19 you should try and stay at home and avoid contact with other people until you feel better.

A pharmacist can give treatment advice. Please check on NHS.UK for further [advice](#) on how to look after yourself at home.

You may be at increased risk of getting seriously ill from flu and COVID-19, for example if you're pregnant, aged 65 and over, have certain health conditions or a weakened immune system. If you are in one of these categories and are showing symptoms, if your symptoms are getting worse or you don't think that you can look after yourself at home, [ask for an urgent GP appointment or get help from NHS 111](#).

You should call 999 or go to A&E if you or your child experience sudden chest pain, become very breathless, develop a rash, start coughing up blood or if your symptoms are making you very unwell.

Flu and COVID-19 vaccines

Why should I get the flu and COVID-19 vaccines?

Flu and COVID-19 vaccines have good safety records and are an effective way to protect yourself from the flu and COVID-19 viruses.

While flu and COVID-19 can be unpleasant, for some it can be very dangerous and even life threatening, particularly people with certain health conditions, older people and pregnant women. For them, it can increase the risk of developing more serious illnesses such as bronchitis and pneumonia or can make existing conditions worse. Every winter, thousands die from flu and people can still get very ill or die from COVID-19.

Children aged under 5 have one of the highest hospitalisation rates for flu. Last year over 6,000 under 5s in England were hospitalised by flu, and many more needed care in accident and emergency. The vaccine reduces a child's chance of needing hospital care for flu by around two thirds.

Having your flu and COVID-19 vaccinations will reduce your risk of serious illness and help you recover more quickly if you catch the viruses. Getting the vaccines while pregnant helps to protect you and your baby from complications if you catch these viruses. The vaccine also helps to protect the baby when it is born as the baby will receive some protection from the transfer of mother's immunity. The vaccines have kept tens of thousands of people out of hospital and helped to save countless lives and

they give you better protection than any immunity gained from previous infections. They also help protect your family and other people in your community, by helping to stop diseases spreading.

In winter, flu and COVID-19 spread more easily as we spend more time indoors. Getting these vaccines ahead of winter are two of the most important things you can do to keep yourself and others around you safe and 'get winter strong'.

When should I get the flu and COVID-19 vaccines?

Flu and COVID-19 spread more easily in winter as we spend more time indoors. Catching both viruses over winter increases the risk of serious illness even further. It is therefore important that you get vaccinated ahead of winter as soon as possible, to give yourself the best possible protection ahead of winter, particularly in light of the risk of new COVID-19 variants.

The NHS is offering the flu vaccine to children from September to protect them and help prevent the spread of the virus. This is because children are more likely to pass this onto others including elderly or vulnerable relatives.

Eligible adults will be able to get their flu and Covid vaccines from October 3. If you are eligible for a vaccine your GP practice will contact you, or you can contact your local pharmacy.

GP surgeries and pharmacies get the flu vaccine in batches to make sure that it is widely available. If you are eligible and cannot get an appointment, ask if you can book an

If no appointments are left for the time or date you have asked for, your GP surgery or pharmacy should book an appointment for you at a later date, or put your name on a list and contact you when more appointments are available.

If I have had a flu or COVID-19 vaccine before, do I need to get it again?

If you are eligible for the flu or COVID-19 vaccine based on the JCVI recommendations, it is important to top up your protection, even if you have had a vaccine or been ill with flu or COVID-19 before, as immunity fades over time and flu and COVID-19 viruses change each year.

The vaccines give you additional protection to that gained from previous infections. If you have had recent COVID-19 you will still get extra protection from the vaccine, but you will need to wait 4 weeks before getting vaccinated.

Could I still get flu and COVID-19 after having the vaccines?

As with other medicines, there is no 100% guarantee that a vaccination will stop you catching the virus. You might still catch the virus but if you do so, it should be less severe with milder symptoms. It may take a few days for your body to build up protection from the vaccines. Having your flu and COVID-19 vaccinations will reduce your risk of serious illness and may help you recover more quickly if you catch the viruses.

Why do I keep needing to have 'booster' doses of the COVID-19 vaccine?

The COVID-19 vaccine is given to top up the protection in those at higher risk from severe COVID-19 illness to help prevent people being hospitalised or dying from COVID-19 over winter 2023/24. During the pandemic, COVID-19 disproportionately affected those in older age groups, residents in care homes for older adults, and those with certain underlying

health conditions, particularly those who are severely immunosuppressed which is why we vaccinate them regularly to 'top up' their protection. In addition, the virus changes every so often and the vaccine is tailored to protect against these changes.

How is it decided who is eligible to get the flu and COVID-19 vaccines for free on the NHS each year?

The flu and COVID-19 vaccine programmes aim to reduce the number of people that get seriously ill and reduce the spread of the viruses. The government decide which groups will be eligible for free vaccines on the NHS. Their decision is based on the independent advice of clinical experts in the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) who review the latest clinical evidence and data.

Can I have the flu and COVID-19 vaccines together?

The JCVI has advised that, for most people, it is fine to have the flu and COVID-19 vaccines at the same time. Where possible, we encourage you to get both vaccines in the same appointment to ensure you are protected against both viruses.

If this is not possible, we encourage you to get each vaccine as soon as you can, rather than waiting to get both at the same time. If you receive both vaccines in one appointment but originally booked two, please do cancel the other appointment so that it becomes available for someone else.

Are the vaccines safe?

The flu and COVID-19 vaccines have a good safety record, and their side effects are generally mild and do not last for more than a few days. Your safety will always come first and there are rigorous safety standards that have to be met through the approval process.

As with any medicine, vaccines are highly regulated products. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), the official UK regulator are globally recognised for requiring the highest standards of safety, quality and effectiveness for medicines and vaccines. There are checks at every stage in the development and manufacturing process. Each of the vaccines are tested on tens of thousands of people across the world. They are tested on both men and women, on people from different ethnic backgrounds, and of all age groups.

Like any other vaccine or medicine, the flu and COVID-19 vaccines are being continuously monitored for safety – the benefits of the vaccines far outweigh risk in the majority of patients. You and your healthcare professional can report any suspected side effects through the tried and trusted Yellow Card Scheme.

How do vaccines work?

Vaccines teach your immune system how to create antibodies that protect you from diseases. It's usually much safer for your immune system to learn this through vaccination than by catching the diseases and treating them. Once your immune system knows how to fight a disease, it can often protect you.

Are there any side effects from the vaccines?

Flu and COVID-19 vaccines have a good safety record. All adult flu and COVID-19 vaccines are given by injection into the muscle of the upper arm.

Most side effects are mild and only last for a day or so, such as:

- having a painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm where you had your injection. This tends to be worst around a day or two following the vaccination
- feeling tired
- headache
- general aches, or mild flu like symptoms.

Try these tips to help reduce the discomfort:

- rest
- continue to move your arm regularly
- take a painkiller, such as [paracetamol](#) or [ibuprofen](#) – some people, including those who are pregnant, should not take ibuprofen unless a doctor recommends it.

Symptoms following vaccination normally last less than a week. If you experience a high temperature, if your symptoms seem to get worse or if you are concerned, you can call NHS 111.

Adult vaccines do not contain any live virus and cannot give you flu or COVID-19.

Worldwide, there have been very rare cases of inflammation of the heart called myocarditis or pericarditis reported after some COVID-19 vaccinations. These cases have been seen mostly in younger men within several days after vaccination. Most of these people recovered and felt better following rest and simple treatments.

You should seek medical advice urgently if, after vaccination, you experience:

- chest pain
- shortness of breath
- feelings of having a fast-beating, fluttering, or pounding heart

You can report suspected side effects of vaccines and medicines through the Yellow Card Scheme:

- online at [Yellow Card Scheme](#)
- by downloading and using the Yellow Card app on [Apple](#) or [Android](#)
- by calling the Yellow Card scheme on 0800 731 6789 (9am to 5pm)

Can I have the vaccine if I feel unwell?

If you are unwell, wait until you have recovered to have your vaccine. You should not attend an appointment if you have a fever or think you might be infectious to others.

Should I get the vaccines if I think I have already had flu or COVID-19?

If you think you've already had flu or COVID-19, once you've recovered you should still get the vaccines as they will still help protect you.

People currently unwell and experiencing COVID-19 symptoms should not receive the COVID-19 vaccine until they have recovered. You can have the vaccine 28 days after you had a positive test for COVID-19 or 28 days after your symptoms started.

Is there anyone that shouldn't get the vaccines?

Almost everybody can have the vaccines, but you should not be vaccinated if you have ever had a serious allergic reaction to any of the flu or COVID-19 vaccines, or any of their ingredients – you should discuss this with your doctor or pharmacist.

If you are allergic to eggs you may not be able to have certain types of flu vaccine – check with your immuniser. If you have a fever, the vaccination may be delayed until you are better.

I've only just had my first or second COVID-19 vaccine, can I have the autumn booster jab?

No, the JCVI advises that the booster vaccine should be offered no earlier than three months after completion of the primary vaccine course.

I haven't yet had the COVID-19 vaccination, can I still get my first jabs?

During this autumn winter programme, those eligible for the primary course COVID-19 vaccination will be the same as those eligible for the seasonal vaccine.

The main exception to this would be unvaccinated individuals aged five years and above who become or have recently become severely immunosuppressed. These individuals should be considered for primary vaccination, regardless of the time of year. Clinical judgement should be used to decide on the best timing to commence vaccination.

Do I need to receive the same type of vaccine or booster as my previous ones?

No, all COVID-19 vaccines authorised for use by the NHS are effective and provide a strong booster response. When you attend your appointment, the NHS will offer you a safe, effective vaccine.

What type of flu vaccine will I be given?

For adults, there are [several types of flu vaccine](#) depending upon your age.

- adults are offered an injectable vaccine. There are different types, including low-egg and egg-free ones
- adults aged 65 years and over – the most common flu vaccine contains an extra ingredient to help your immune system make a stronger response to the vaccine

Most children aged 2 or over are offered a nasal spray vaccine – this is given as a quick and painless spray up the nose. Those aged under 2 and a small number of children due to pre-existing medical conditions or treatments cannot have the nasal spray and are offered protection through an injected vaccine instead.

What type of COVID-19 vaccine will I be given?

There are several different COVID-19 vaccines in use in the UK. They have all met strict standards of safety, quality and effectiveness. Most people can have any of the COVID-19 vaccines and will be offered a vaccine that gives protection from more than one type of COVID-19. You cannot choose which vaccine you have.

Some people are only offered certain vaccines, for example:

- if you're pregnant
- if you're under 18 years old
- if you're 75 years old or over
- in very rare cases if you've had a severe allergic reaction to one of the common vaccines you may be referred to a specialist clinic for an alternative COVID-19 vaccine

Eligibility and how to book

When should I get the flu and COVID-19 vaccines?

Flu and COVID-19 spread more easily in winter as we spend more time indoors. Catching both viruses over winter increases the risk of serious illness even further. It is therefore important that you get vaccinated ahead of winter as soon as possible, to give yourself the best possible protection ahead of winter, in light of the risk of new COVID-19 variants.

The NHS is offering the flu vaccine to children from September to protect them and help prevent the spread of the virus. This is because children are more likely to pass this onto others including elderly or vulnerable relatives.

Eligible adults will be able to get their flu and Covid vaccines from October 3. If you are eligible for a vaccine your GP practice will contact you, or you can contact your local pharmacy. In some rare circumstances, eligible adults may be offered the vaccination before 3 October, but your GP will contact you in these circumstances. Please wait to be invited. Separate arrangements will be made for people who live in Care Homes or are housebound.

If no appointments are left for the time or date you have asked for, your GP surgery or pharmacy should book an appointment for you at a later date, or put your name on a list and contact you when more appointments are available.

Who can get both winter vaccines?

People who can get both flu and covid vaccines are -

- Adults 65+
- 6 months-64 years old and clinically at risk
- All Residents & Staff working in a Care home which includes Older Adults
- Pregnant women
- Frontline health and social care workers
- Patients identified by their GP as housebound & clinically at risk

Who can get the flu vaccine?

The flu vaccine is offered to people most at risk of getting seriously ill from flu or who are most likely to pass flu to other people at risk. The following people are eligible for the free flu vaccine this season:

- all children aged 2 or 3 years on 31 August 2024
- all school aged children (from Reception to Year 11)
- those aged 6 months of age upwards in a clinical risk group (as set out in the [Green Book](#))
- people that are pregnant
- those aged 65 years and over
- those in long-stay residential care homes
- carers in receipt of a carer's allowance, or who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person
- those that live with someone who is more likely to get infections (such as someone living with HIV, has had a transplant or is having certain treatments for cancer, lupus or rheumatoid arthritis)
- frontline workers in a social care setting that do not have access to occupational

health

Which health conditions make me eligible for a flu vaccine?

The flu vaccine is offered to anyone with a serious health condition, including:

- respiratory conditions, i.e., asthma, chronic pulmonary disease, including emphysema and bronchitis, cystic fibrosis
 - diabetes
 - heart conditions such as coronary heart disease or heart failure
 - being very overweight – a BMI of 40 or above
 - chronic kidney disease
 - liver disease, such as hepatitis
 - neurological conditions, i.e., Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS) or cerebral palsy
 - a learning disability
 - problems with your spleen, e.g., sickle cell
 - a weakened immune system as the result of conditions i.e., HIV and AIDs or taking
- A full list of clinical risk groups is included in Chapter 19 of the [Green Book](#). If you have a condition that is not included in the list, you can speak to your GP who can offer a flu vaccine if they think you are at risk of serious complications from catching flu.

Who can get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Seasonal COVID-19 vaccines are offered to those at increased risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19 – this may be due to a health condition or age. JCVI has recommended that the following groups should be able to get a COVID-19 vaccine this autumn/winter:

- residents and staff in a care home which includes older adults
- people that are pregnant
- all adults aged 65 years and over
- frontline health and social care workers
- persons aged 6 months to 64 years in a clinical risk group, as defined in tables 3 and 4 of the [COVID-19 chapter of the Green book](#)

Which health conditions make me eligible for a COVID-19 vaccination?

The COVID-19 vaccine is offered to those with a serious health condition. Those that can get the COVID-19 vaccine due to a health condition are broadly similar to those that can get a flu vaccine including:

- respiratory conditions, i.e., poorly controlled asthma, chronic pulmonary disease, including emphysema and bronchitis, cystic fibrosis
- diabetes
- heart conditions such as coronary heart disease or heart failure
- being very overweight – a BMI of 40 or above
- chronic kidney disease
- liver disease, such as hepatitis
- neurological conditions, i.e., Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS) or cerebral palsy
- a learning disability
- those with a severe mental illness
- problems with your spleen, e.g., sickle cell
- a weakened immune system as the result of conditions ie HIV and AIDs or treatment e.g. steroids or chemotherapy

A full list of clinical risk groups is included in tables 3 and 4 in Chapter 14a of the [Green Book](#).

Will I be invited to get my winter vaccines?

You may be invited to get your winter vaccines by the NHS nationally or by your GP practice through a letter, text or email. If you receive an invitation from the NHS and have already been vaccinated this season, do not worry, sometimes there is a delay in the information flowing through and you do not need to do anything.

How can I book my winter vaccines?

From 23 September, to get your COVID-19 vaccination:

- Book online at www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination
- Use the NHS App
- Call 119 if you don't have online access, to book at one of the same sites
- Find your nearest COVID-19 vaccination walk-in site at www.nhs.uk/covid-walk-in.

To get your flu vaccination:

- Wait until you are contacted by your GP practice
- Find your nearest pharmacy offering the vaccine at www.nhs.uk/flu-pharmacy
-

If you need support:

- If you can't get online, phone 119 for help arranging your vaccinations. Interpreters will be available on request
- If you usually get your care at home, please contact your GP surgery to arrange a home visit with a local NHS service.
- If you are housebound or are not able to travel to a vaccination centre, your local NHS services will be in touch to make arrangements.
- If you have difficulties communicating or hearing, or are a British Sign Language (BSL) user you can go [online at NHS.UK](http://online.at.NHS.UK), use textphone 18001 119 or the [NHS BSL interpreter service](#).

Where will I get my winter vaccines?

This depends where you book your appointment but adults can get their flu vaccine through their GP practices or a community pharmacy. Pregnant women can also get their flu vaccine through their maternity service. Eligible children under 5 will get their flu vaccine through their GP and school age children will be offered their flu vaccine through their school age vaccination services so will either get the vaccine in school or at a community clinic.

People will be able to have their COVID-19 vaccination in a community pharmacy, local vaccination service or they may be invited by their GP practice.

Eligible people can choose to book an appointment to have both their flu and COVID-19 vaccines together in one appointment by booking through the NHS website.

Residents in care homes will be offered their vaccines in their care home.

Health and social care staff may be offered their vaccines through their employer.

Patients identified by their GP as housebound & clinically at risk - will receive a call from the GP or a local community pharmacy to arrange a home visit.

Winter vaccines in children

Why does my child need to get the flu vaccine?

Children have been prioritised to get the flu vaccine from September to protect them and help stop the virus spreading to others. Children aged under 5 have one of the highest hospitalisation rates for flu. Last year over 6,000 under 5s in England were hospitalised by flu, and many more needed care in accident and emergency. The vaccine reduces a child's chance of needing hospital care for flu by around two thirds. The vaccine is usually given as a quick and painless spray up the nose.

Why does my child need the seasonal COVID-19 vaccine?

The seasonal COVID-19 vaccine is offered to protect those most at risk of serious illness from the virus.

Which children can get the flu and seasonal COVID-19 vaccines?

The [flu vaccine is offered to most children](#) including all aged 2 and 3 years old, school aged children from reception to year 11 and those aged 6 months to 17 years old with certain health conditions.

Children aged 5 years and over with [certain health conditions](#) will be able to get the seasonal COVID-19 vaccine. COVID-19 vaccinations for children aged 6 months to 4 years are managed at a local level. Children under 12 years old will be given smaller doses than older children and adults.

How do I book my child's winter vaccine?

If your child is eligible for a seasonal COVID-19 vaccine, you will be able to book this online at www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination or via the NHS App.

If your child is aged 2 or 3 years old or if they are aged 6 months to 2 years with certain health conditions you can book a flu vaccination appointment at their GP surgery.

If your child is of school age, you do not need to book an appointment for them to get a flu vaccination. They will be vaccinated in schools or community clinics through the school aged immunisation service. Parents should wait to be invited and complete the necessary consent documentation accordingly. If your child is in a clinical risk group please contact your GP if you would like your child to receive the flu vaccine earlier in the season.

Where will my child receive their winter vaccines?

Your child will receive their COVID-19 vaccine at a local vaccination centre or community pharmacy.

For the flu vaccine:

2 or 3 years old	GP surgery
6 months to 17 years in clinical risk group	GP surgery (or can receive in school/community clinic if school aged)
School aged children in reception to year 11	School or community clinic

When can I book my child's winter vaccinations?

If your child is aged 2-3 years or aged 6 months – 17 years of age and in a clinical at risk group we encourage you to book your child's flu vaccine as soon as the vaccine becomes available from September to ensure that your child is protected ahead of winter and to help prevent the spread of the virus.

What COVID-19 vaccine will my child receive?

Comirnaty 3 for Infants and children 6 months to 4 years

Comirnaty 10 for children 5-11 years

Comirnaty 30 for children 12+ years

What flu vaccine will my child receive?

- Most children over the age of 2 are offered a nasal spray vaccine – this is given as a quick and painless spray up the nose.
- A small number cannot have it due to pre-existing medical conditions or treatments and are offered protection through an injected vaccine instead.
- The nasal spray contains small traces of porcine gelatine. For those who may not accept the use of porcine gelatine in medicines, an injectable vaccine is available. If your child is aged between 6 months and 2 years old and is in a clinical risk group for flu, they will be offered an injected flu vaccine as the nasal spray is not licensed for children under the age of 2.

Are there any children that shouldn't get the nasal flu vaccine?

Some children will be offered the injected flu vaccine if they have:

- a severely weakened immune system
- asthma that's being treated with steroid tablets or has needed intensive care in hospital
- a flare-up of asthma symptoms (such as they've been wheezy in the past 72 hours or are currently wheezy) and need to use a reliever inhaler more than usual
- had an allergic reaction to a flu vaccine in the past
- a condition that needs salicylate treatment

Children will also be offered the injected flu vaccine if they live with somebody with a severely weakened immune system who requires isolation (for example, someone who has had a bone marrow transplant).

If you're not sure, check with the school aged immunisation service team, the nurse or GP at your surgery, or the specialist if your child has hospital care.

The nasal spray vaccine contains small traces of pork gelatine. If you do not accept the use of pork gelatine in medical products, the injected vaccine is available as an alternative.

Side effects of the children's flu vaccine

The nasal spray flu vaccine for children has an excellent safety record. Most side effects are mild and do not last long, such as:

- a runny or blocked nose
- a headache
- tiredness
- loss of appetite

Winter vaccines in pregnancy

Should I get the flu and seasonal COVID-19 vaccines whilst I'm pregnant?

If you're pregnant you're at higher risk of getting seriously ill from flu and COVID-19. There is good evidence that pregnant women have a higher chance of developing complications if they get flu, particularly in the later stages of pregnancy. One of the most common complications of flu is bronchitis, a chest infection that can become serious and develop into pneumonia.

If you have flu or COVID-19 while you're pregnant, it could cause your baby to be born prematurely or have a low birthweight, it increases the need for admission to intensive care for mum and baby and may even lead to stillbirth or death. If you get flu and COVID-19 at the same time, the symptoms are likely to be more serious.

Getting your winter vaccines is the safest and most effective way for women to protect themselves and their baby against flu and COVID-19 and it also reduces the risk of having a stillbirth. The antibodies your body produces in response to the vaccine can also give your baby protection against flu and COVID-19 which lasts for the first few months of their lives.

It's safe to have the flu and COVID-19 vaccines during any stage of pregnancy, from the first few weeks up to your expected due date. It's also safe for women who are breastfeeding to have the vaccines. There's no evidence flu and COVID-19 vaccination increases the risk of having a miscarriage, pre-term birth or other complications in your pregnancy. It's strongly recommended that you get vaccinated against flu and COVID-19 ahead of winter to protect you and your baby.

Can I get the flu and COVID-19 vaccine at the same time whilst pregnant?

It's safe to receive the flu and COVID-19 vaccines at the same time. You may be offered them at the same time or you may be offered, or to decide to have them, separately. Where possible, we encourage you to get both vaccines in the same appointment to save you time and ensure you are protected against both viruses. If this is not possible, we encourage you to get each vaccine as soon as you can, rather than waiting to get both at the same time. If you receive both vaccines in one appointment but originally booked two, please do cancel the other appointment so that it becomes available for someone else.

Can I have the flu and COVID-19 vaccines at the same time as the whooping cough (pertussis) vaccine?

Yes, you can have the vaccines at the same time as the whooping cough vaccine (pertussis vaccine), but do not delay your winter vaccines so you can have all of the vaccines at the same time. Pregnant women are at risk of severe illness from flu and COVID-19 at any stage of pregnancy, so you need to have the vaccines as soon as possible. The best time to get vaccinated against whooping cough is from 16 weeks up to 32 weeks of pregnancy. If you miss having the vaccine for any reason, you can still have it up until you go into labour.

What winter vaccines will I receive whilst pregnant?

You will be offered a vaccine that is suitable for you. If you have any questions, you can discuss these with your GP practice or maternity team.

When can I receive the flu and COVID-19 vaccines?

You can book the flu vaccine from 18 September and COVID-19 vaccine from 23 September. The COVID-19 vaccine is available up until 20 December, but there may be opportunities to have the vaccine after this date, but we would encourage you to book during this time if possible. The flu vaccine is

available up until the end of March if you find out that you are pregnant later in the flu season.

How can I book my winter vaccines?

For the COVID-19 vaccine, you can book this online at www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination (where, from October, you may be asked if you want a flu vaccination at the same appointment) or via the NHS App.

For the flu vaccine, you will be contacted by your GP practice or you can contact a local pharmacy. You can find your nearest pharmacy offering the vaccine at www.nhs.uk/flu-pharmacy. In some areas, midwives can give the flu vaccine at the antenatal clinic. It's a good idea to get vaccinated against flu as soon as possible after the vaccine becomes available. Do not worry if you find that you're pregnant later in the flu season – you can have the vaccine up until March if you have not already had it.

Winter vaccines in frontline health and social care workers

Why should healthcare workers receive the flu and seasonal COVID-19 vaccines?

To maintain a high level of protection through the coming winter, frontline healthcare workers will be offered the flu vaccine and a COVID-19 vaccine to protect themselves and those in their care who are most at risk.

For some, flu and COVID-19 are unpleasant illnesses. But for many, particularly those with certain health conditions, they can be very dangerous and even life threatening. Every winter, thousands die from flu and people can still get very ill or die from COVID-19. Catching both viruses increases the risk of serious illness even further.

As a healthcare worker, you're more likely to be exposed to the viruses. You will also be caring for people who may be at greater risk from these viruses. Being healthy doesn't reduce your risk of getting these viruses or passing them on. You can have flu and COVID-19 without any symptoms and pass it on to family, friends, colleagues and patients, many of whom may be at increased risk of serious illness if they get these viruses.

Vaccines are our best protection against flu and COVID-19. Over the last few years they have kept tens of thousands of people out of hospital and helped to save countless lives. Getting your vaccines is straight forward and while some people may experience some mild short lived side effects, they will keep you protected and if you do run into these viruses, your symptoms are likely to be milder and you may recover faster, cutting your risk of being hospitalised.

Getting both vaccines ahead of winter, when the viruses spread more easily, are two of the most important things you can do to keep yourself and others around you safe, so you can continue to be there for the people you care for.

Why do I need a flu and seasonal COVID-19 vaccine again, when I had this last winter?

It is important to top up your protection, even if you have had a vaccine or been ill with flu or COVID-19 before, as immunity fades over time and flu and COVID-19 viruses change each year. The vaccines give you additional protection to that gained from previous infections and gives you good protection from being seriously ill or needing to go to hospital if you catch flu or COVID-19.

When should I get my vaccines as a health and social care worker?

The seasonal flu and COVID-19 vaccines are available from early October. We encourage you to get both vaccines in the same visit where possible, for protection against both viruses in just a few minutes. If this is not possible, it is better to get each vaccine as soon as you can, rather than waiting.

Is the flu vaccine and COVID-19 booster mandatory for frontline health and social care staff?

No, having the flu and COVID-19 vaccines is not compulsory for health and care staff, but is an important protection for them and those they come into contact with. Local employers will be working hard to ensure all staff can get the flu and COVID-19 vaccines this autumn and winter, and we are confident that most of our staff will choose to protect themselves and those around them by getting the vaccine.

How do I get my flu vaccine as a frontline health and social care worker?

The flu vaccine should be provided to frontline health and social care workers by their employer as part of the organisation's policy to prevent the transmission of infection. Employers may offer the flu vaccine to staff at their place of work or from another local service. Your employer will provide more information on how to get your flu vaccine.

Social care workers who are in direct contact with people who receive care should also have the flu vaccine provided by their employer. If your employer is not able to offer the flu vaccine, you can get this through a complimentary NHS scheme. This scheme applies to specific frontline workers in a social care setting including registered domiciliary care providers, voluntary managed hospice providers and those that receive direct payments or personal health budgets.

Through the complimentary NHS scheme, you can book your vaccine through your GP surgery, local pharmacy or the [flu national booking system](#). You do not need to present your ID but if you ask your employer to provide you with a letter identifying you as a social care professional it may make things easier on the day.

You may be offered your COVID-19 vaccine at the same time, or separately. If you are offered either vaccine, get them as soon as possible.

How do I get my COVID-19 vaccine as a frontline health and social care worker?

The COVID-19 vaccine may be offered through your employer or you can book the COVID-19 vaccine through the National Booking Service or by calling 119. Some areas will also offer local walk-in vaccinations. All eligible frontline staff will continue to be able to self-declare online, on the NHS App or through 119.

You may be offered your flu vaccine at the same time, or separately. If you are offered either vaccine, get them as soon as possible.