

Get flu protected

Advice to help you
keep well this winter



Health &
wellbeing



Age UK is the new force combining Age Concern and Help the Aged.

*With almost 120 years of combined
history to draw on, we are bringing
together our talents, services and
solutions to do more to enrich
the lives of people in later life.*

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Please seek medical advice for guidance regarding the seasonal flu jab. It is particularly important to seek such advice if you suffer from an ongoing medical condition and which may be affected by having the flu jab.

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Introduction

The cold weather is on its way, and with it comes the start of the flu season. Flu is not simply a bad cold and it can increase your risk of more serious illness, so help protect yourself by having a seasonal flu jab – and make sure you've had the one-off 'pneumo' jab too.

This leaflet offers helpful information about the flu jab, as well as a few ways to look after yourself in cold weather.

Useful contacts

We provide advice and information for people in later life through our Age UK Advice line, publications and online.

Age UK Advice: 0800 169 65 65
www.ageuk.org.uk

In Wales, contact
Age Cymru: 0800 169 65 65
www.agecymru.org.uk

In Scotland, contact
Age Scotland: 0845 125 9732
www.agescotland.org.uk

In Northern Ireland, contact
Age NI: 0808 808 7575
www.ageni.org.uk

Some common questions about seasonal flu and vaccination

I had a seasonal flu jab last year. Do I need one this year?

Seasonal flu is a highly infectious disease caused by viruses that are always changing. You need a flu jab every year because a new vaccine is produced to target those viruses most likely to be in circulation.

Why are some people eligible for a free seasonal flu jab?

Some people are more susceptible to the effects of flu as it can increase their risk of something more serious, such as bronchitis or pneumonia. Catching flu can also make some existing conditions worse.

Vaccination is recommended if you're aged 65 and over, and you should consider it regardless of your age if you have certain health conditions such as a heart problem or a chronic breathing problem (e.g. bronchitis or emphysema); or if you have had a stroke, mini-stroke, diabetes, chronic kidney/liver disease; or if you have lowered immunity.

If you are the main carer for an older person or someone with one of the above conditions, speak to your GP as he may recommend that you are vaccinated too.

Will being vaccinated stop me catching flu?

Your body produces antibodies against the viruses in the vaccine about a week to ten days after vaccination. These antibodies help fight off these and similar viruses you may encounter over the next year.

Most people who are vaccinated won't get seasonal flu, but it doesn't give 100 per cent protection. For every 100 people vaccinated, between 70 and 80 will be protected, while others are more likely to experience milder symptoms.

Remember: The vaccine does not contain live viruses so it can't give you flu.

What should I do if I'm eligible for a free flu jab?

Ask your GP practice about their vaccination programme. It's likely to start in the autumn, well in advance of any likely outbreak of seasonal flu. Make sure you tell them about any allergies, or if you had a reaction when vaccinated in the past.

You may notice that your vaccinated arm is a bit sore or you have a slight temperature or aching muscles for a few days afterwards, but other side effects are rare.



Colds and other winter illnesses

You're more likely to have a cold, cough or sore throat during the winter months. Although they're a nuisance and can make you feel miserable, they are not as serious as flu.

It's usually a case of taking medication to ease the symptoms, but speak to your pharmacist or **call NHS Direct on 0845 46 47** (England and Wales) if you have any concerns.

Your pharmacist can discuss your symptoms and suggest non-prescription medicines. They can also help you decide if you need to see a doctor.

NHS Direct is a 24-hour telephone helpline staffed by nurses. They can listen to your symptoms and, by asking a series of questions, suggest the most appropriate thing to do. Alternatively, you could use the symptom checker on their website **www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk**

NHS Direct is a 24-hour telephone helpline staffed by nurses.



Tips for keeping healthy this winter

1. Have a seasonal flu jab

2. If you're over 65 or at higher risk of infection, check you've had the 'one-off' pneumo jab that protects against pneumonia and septicaemia.

3. Eat well

Have at least one hot meal each day and plenty of hot drinks throughout the day. Vary your meals and aim to have five portions of different fruit and vegetables a day.

4. Keep warm

Make sure you wear warm clothes. Layers of clothes rather than thick bulky items are best. Also check your heating system is working properly, well before the winter starts.

5. Keep moving

Try not to sit for more than an hour at a time. Keeping active generates heat and helps to keep you warm. It's good for your general fitness and well-being too.

6. Stay safe in icy weather

To reduce your risk of slips, trips and broken bones, don't go out unless you have to. Wear shoes with non-slip soles if you have to go out.

For more information on keeping warm this winter, call **Age UK Advice** on **0800 169 65 65** and request our free information guide, *Winter wrapped up*.

Further information

Keep Warm Keep Well is a national campaign to help you find out about financial and other help available to help you keep warm and stay well in winter. See www.direct.gov.uk/keepwarmkeepwell

If contact details for your local Age UK/Age Concern* are not in the box below, call Age UK Advice free on **0800 169 65 65**.



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*Many local Age Concerns are changing their name to Age UK.

Age UK is a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in England (registered charity number 1128267 and registered company number 6825798). The registered address is 207-221 Pentonville Road, London N1 9UZ. Age Concern England (registered charity number 261794) and Help the Aged (registered charity number 272786), and their trading and other associated companies merged on 1 April 2009. Together they have formed the Age UK Group, dedicated to improving the lives of people in later life. The three national Age Concerns in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have also merged with Help the Aged in these nations to form three registered charities: Age Scotland, Age NI and Age Cymru. ID9517 10/10