



Public Health  
England



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care



# Why am I being asked to wait to have my flu vaccine?

## Information about flu vaccine supplies

People who are most at risk from the complications of flu are recommended to get a flu vaccine every year. This winter it is especially important with flu and coronavirus (COVID-19) both in circulation. Research shows that if you get both at the same time you may be more seriously ill.

### Who is eligible for a flu vaccine?

You can get a free flu vaccine if you are: aged 65 years old and over (including those aged 65 by 31 March 2021); have certain health conditions; live with someone who is on the NHS shielded patient list; are pregnant; or receive a carer's allowance, or are the main carer of an older or disabled person who may be at risk if you get sick.

Children aged 2 to 11 years old on the 31 August 2020 are also eligible for the flu vaccine (with 2 and 3 year olds offered it in GP surgeries and school aged children offered it in school).

You can get the flu vaccine at your GP surgery or a pharmacy, if you're a health or social care worker employed by a:

- registered residential care or nursing home
- registered homecare organisation hospice

Or if you provide health or social care through direct payments or personal health budgets.

This year the free flu vaccine will be offered to all 50 to 64 year olds later in the season (except for 50 to 64 year olds who have a health condition that makes them more at risk from flu, who will be offered it sooner). Visit [www.nhs.uk/flujab](http://www.nhs.uk/flujab) to check whether you are eligible.

### I am in one of the listed groups. Why am I being asked to wait to have my flu vaccine?

Overall there is enough flu vaccine for everyone who is eligible to get vaccinated before the flu season starts, which is usually in December. Flu vaccine is delivered to GP practices, pharmacies and other services in batches in the run up to and over flu season. This year, early demand for flu vaccine has been higher than usual. This has meant that while a lot of people have been able to get vaccinated, some people have not been able to get vaccinated straight away as some GP practices and pharmacies have used their early supplies of flu vaccine, due to the level of demand.



If you are eligible and haven't been able to get your vaccination yet, you will still be able to have it before flu season starts.

### **Can I go elsewhere if my GP practice or pharmacy has run out?**

If you are eligible for the free flu vaccine, you may get it either from your own GP practice or any pharmacy offering NHS flu vaccinations. They should be able to tell you when they expect to be able to offer you a vaccine.

Pregnant women can ask their maternity provider for the free flu vaccine and some of those visiting hospitals, either as in- or out-patients may also be offered the flu vaccine there.

### **Why are some people still being offered the vaccine and not others?**

There are several types of flu vaccines available. You will be offered one that is recommended for you based on your age. This means some people will be offered a flu vaccine that is in stock while others, who need a different type of vaccine, may have to wait.

### **Wouldn't it be better to have any type of flu vaccine rather than wait?**

Providers of flu vaccination services are required to offer the vaccine that is most effective for you. It is better to wait to get the right vaccine so that you get the most benefit from it.

### **When do you need to have a flu vaccination for it to offer protection?**

It is best to have the vaccine before flu starts to circulate, which is usually

from December onwards. But if you have the vaccine later than this, it is still worth having.

The priority this year is to vaccinate those who are most at risk from flu first, including people of all ages who have a health condition that makes them more at risk from flu. Other 50 to 64 year olds (who do not have a health condition that puts them at risk from flu) will be offered the vaccine later on and should wait to be invited for a vaccination.

### **What should I do now?**

The National Call and Recall service are writing to eligible patients throughout the flu season this year to remind them to get the vaccine and you may also be invited by your GP practice to make an appointment. However, you do not have to wait until you receive a letter to get vaccinated. If you have been advised you are eligible for a flu vaccine but can't have the flu vaccine now because the best vaccine for you is not currently available, please follow the advice from your GP surgery or pharmacy and remember to book in an appointment at the next opportunity.

**For 50 to 64 year olds, who do not have a health condition that puts them at risk from flu, you will be offered the vaccine later on and should wait to be invited for a vaccination.**

