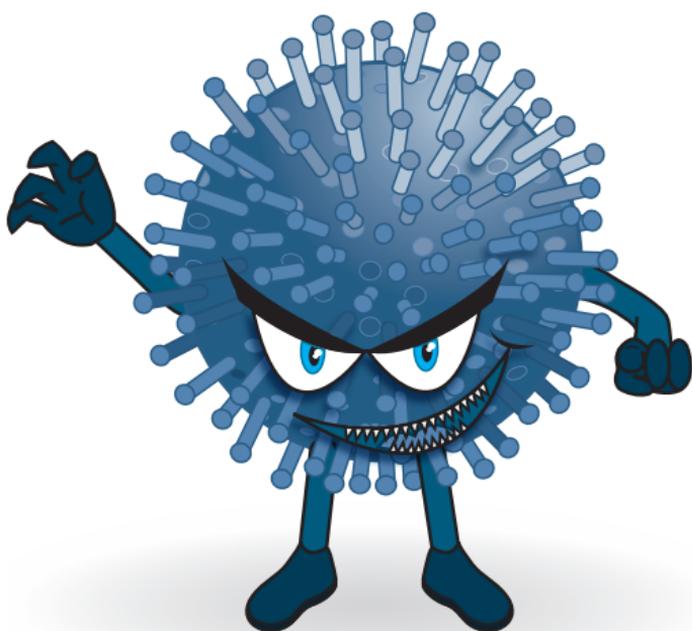
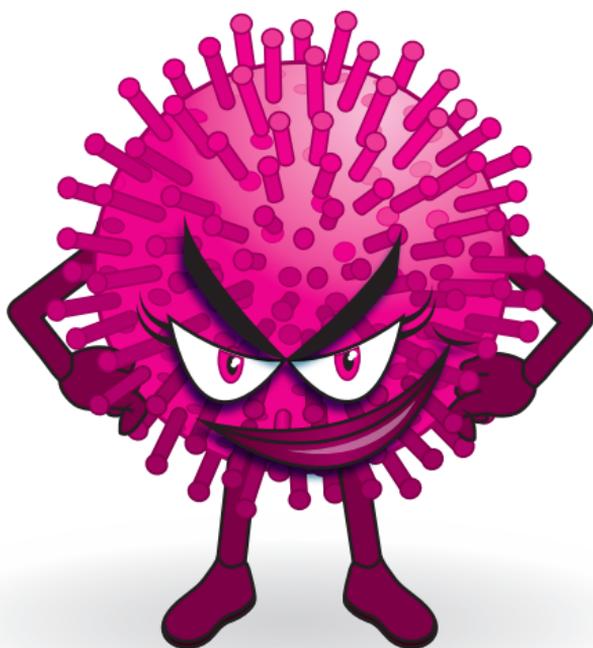




GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES



**PROTECTING HEALTH
AND SOCIAL CARE
WORKERS FROM
INFLUENZA (FLU)**



What is flu?

Flu outbreaks occur every year, usually in the winter. People sometimes call a bad cold the flu, but having flu is much worse than a cold. Flu is a highly infectious disease caused by a virus. Symptoms include fever, chills, headache, aching muscles, cough and sore throat - and because flu is a virus, antibiotics won't help. Vaccination is available to help protect people who are more at risk.

Even if people had flu or were vaccinated last year, they may not be protected this year because the flu viruses change.

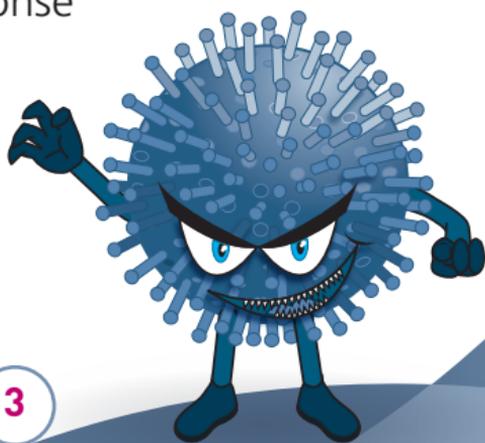
Who is most at risk from flu?

Anyone can get flu but it is more serious for older people, pregnant women and people with some medical conditions, particularly chronic heart or respiratory diseases and diabetes. Flu can lead to complications such as bronchitis and pneumonia which may need hospital treatment and can be life-threatening for people who are already ill.

Why immunise health and social care workers?

Health and social care workers are at increased risk of infection, and vaccination can reduce the spread of flu in health and social care settings. This helps to:

- protect health and social care workers, their families, and other health and social care staff too.
- make sure health and social care services are effective and efficient by minimising staff absence resulting from flu illness.
- protect vulnerable patients and service users, including those who may already be unwell, may have a poor immune response or not respond well to their own immunisation.



Who should have the vaccine?

All health and social care staff who are directly involved in patient care in:

- general practice including dental practices;
- NHS hospitals;
- private hospitals;
- residential care homes;
- patients' or clients' own homes.

Examples of staff directly involved in patient care are:

- Nurses;
- Doctors and Dentists;
- Midwives;
- Allied health professionals;
- All support and administrative workers in direct contact with patients.

What is in the flu vaccine?

The flu vaccine contains parts of two types of influenza A virus and one type of influenza B virus. The vaccine offers good protection for one year.

Is the vaccine safe?

Flu vaccines are used throughout the world, and have an excellent safety record.

Some people get a slight temperature and aching muscles for a couple of days afterwards, and their arm may feel a bit sore where they were injected. Other reactions are very rare and health professionals giving vaccinations are trained to deal with them.

Can the flu vaccine cause flu?

No. The flu vaccine cannot cause flu. Some people may experience mild flu-like symptoms for up to 48 hours as their immune system responds to the vaccine but this is not flu.

It is important that the vaccination is given before flu starts circulating each year and vaccinations are normally available from the end of September. Those eligible for vaccination need to ask their employer about getting a flu jab as early as possible.

How effective is the vaccine?

Flu vaccinations provide 70% of healthy people who receive them with full protection against the strains of flu in the vaccine. In some people the response is less, this includes the elderly and those with a poor immune system. There are many different types of flu viruses and the vaccine will protect against the most common ones. **The vaccination will not protect against all coughs and colds, or other flu-like viruses.**

How does the vaccine work?

About a week to 10 days after having the vaccine your body makes antibodies to the vaccine viruses. These antibodies help to protect you against any similar flu viruses if you come into contact with them.

Is there anybody who can't have the flu vaccine?

Most people can safely have the vaccine.

- Only people who have previously had a confirmed anaphylactic reaction to the flu vaccine or any of its ingredients cannot normally have a flu vaccination.
- People who have a serious allergy to hens' eggs can still be vaccinated with egg free or low egg protein (ovalbumin) content vaccine.
- The nasal flu vaccine licensed for use in those under 18 years of age, should not be given to someone who is immunosuppressed.
- The health professionals giving the vaccinations will be able to answer any questions.

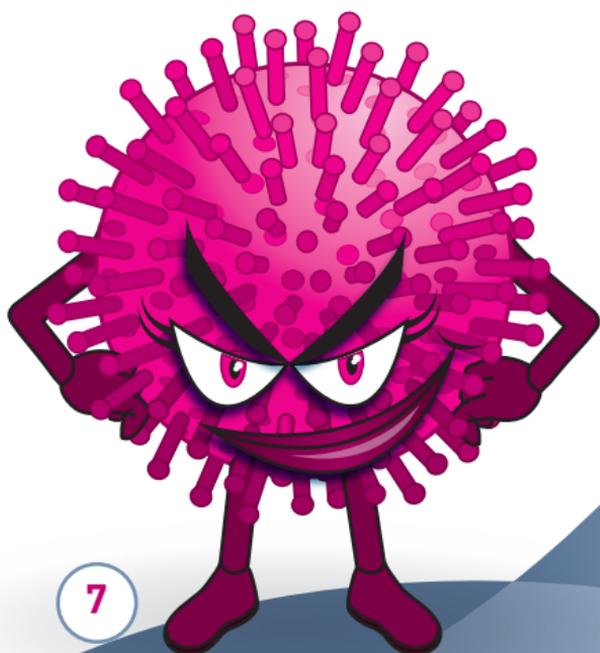
Can the vaccine be given to pregnant women?

Yes. All pregnant women should receive flu vaccine as early as possible to protect themselves and their unborn baby from the serious complications that flu infection can cause pregnant women. The injectable flu vaccine is safe in all stages of pregnancy.

The nasal flu vaccine, licensed for use in those under 18 years of age, is not recommended during pregnancy.

Where can health and social care workers get the vaccine from?

They should contact their occupational health department for more information. Those who work in primary health or social care should contact their employer.



A note to employers

Employers are responsible for ensuring that arrangements are in place for the vaccination of their health and social care workers.

Vaccination of healthcare workers against flu significantly lowers rates of flu-like illness, hospitalisation and mortality in the elderly in healthcare settings.

Leaflet availability

This bilingual leaflet is available on the Welsh Government immunisation website at: www.wales.gov.uk/immunisation

Queries about this leaflet can be addressed to:

Health Protection Division

Welsh Government

Cathays Park

Cardiff, CF10 3NQ

Tel: 0845 606 4050