



# Seasonal Flu (Influenza)

## Information for patients, visitors and staff

### What is flu?

Flu or influenza is a virus that can cause a respiratory infection that is similar, but more severe, than a cold.

Flu will often get better on its own, but it can make some people seriously ill. It is important to get the flu vaccine if you are advised to.

### Check if you have flu

Flu symptoms come on very quickly and can include:

- a sudden high temperature
- an aching body
- feeling tired or exhausted
- a dry cough
- a sore throat
- a headache
- difficulty sleeping
- loss of appetite
- diarrhoea or tummy pain
- feeling sick and being sick

The symptoms are similar for children, but they can also get pain in their ear and appear less active.

### How does flu spread?

Flu can be highly infectious and is spread from person to person. If someone with flu coughs or sneezes, they can spread the virus into the air and onto surfaces. If you breathe in or touch the virus, you could develop the disease.

If you have become infected, flu symptoms usually start within 1 to 4 days.

### How to treat flu yourself

If you have flu, there are some things you can do to help get better more quickly, such as

- rest and sleep.
- keep warm.
- take paracetamol or ibuprofen to lower your temperature and treat aches and pains.
- give paracetamol or ibuprofen to your child if they are distressed or uncomfortable – check the packaging or leaflet to make sure the medicine is suitable for your child, or speak to a Pharmacist or GP if you are not sure.
- drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration (your pee should be light yellow or clear).



## How to avoid spreading the flu

Flu is very infectious and easily spread to other people. You're more likely to give it to others in the first five days.

Flu is spread by germs from coughs and sneezes, which can live on hands and surfaces for 24 hours.

To reduce the risk of spreading flu:

- clean your hands often.
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze (if you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into the bend of your elbow, not into your hand).
- bin used tissues as quickly as possible.

Try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people if you have a high temperature or you do not feel well enough to do your normal activities.



## Should I visit the doctor?

Visiting your GP or Accident and Emergency carries a high risk of exposing others to flu. You should not visit. If you do not recover within a few days or develop a persistent cough, then phone your GP.

**Remember: the flu is a virus and is not killed by antibiotics, so do not expect antibiotics for flu or colds.**



### What happens if I am in hospital with the flu?

If you are in hospital and are thought to have flu, then several things may happen:

- A single swab from your throat and nose will be taken to find out if you do have the flu.
- You may be given anti-viral medication. This does not stop you from getting the flu but can reduce the severity of the symptoms and shorten the illness.
- If you are admitted with flu, you are likely to be put in isolation to reduce the risk of giving it to other patients.

### What happens if there is a flu outbreak while I am in hospital?

If you are part of an outbreak of flu, you may be isolated within a ward with other patients with or without symptoms, as everyone has been exposed. You may be given anti-viral medication to reduce the risk of developing the flu. Although this will not stop the flu, if you do get ill, it will be less severe and of a shorter duration.

### How to get a flu vaccine

Flu vaccines are safe and effective. They are offered on the NHS every year in autumn or early winter to help protect people at risk of flu and its complications. Vaccines are also available from pharmacies at a cost to all others.

### Who should get the flu vaccine?

- Those aged 65 years and over
- Children aged 2-3yrs
- School aged children (from Reception year 11)
- Those aged 6 months to 65 years in clinical risk groups
- Pregnant women
- Those in long-stay residential care homes
- Carers
- Close contacts of those immunocompromised
- Frontline health and care workers

### What type of flu vaccine should I have?

You will be offered the one that is most effective for your age. [Flu vaccine - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/flu-vaccine)

### Any further questions?

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact the Infection Control team, on 020 7288 3679, or you can ask the ward manager to contact us.

Additional information can be found on NHS Choices: [www.nhs.uk/](https://www.nhs.uk/)

The information in this leaflet has been sourced from [National flu immunisation programme 2024 to 2025 letter - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/814442/national-flu-immunisation-programme-2024-to-2025-letter.pdf),



### Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or [whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net)

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please email [whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net). We will try our best to meet your needs.

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Whittington Health NHS Trust  
Magdala Avenue  
London  
N19 5NF  
Phone: 020 7272 3070  
[www.whittington.nhs.uk](http://www.whittington.nhs.uk)

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