

Flu

What is Flu?

Flu is an infectious virus and is most common from December to March. There is no cure for flu and every winter thousands of people over the age of 65 years old and with long-term health conditions have the flu vaccination to protect themselves.

Flu symptoms

Many people confuse a common cold with the more serious virus that is known as flu. Common symptoms of flu are:

- a temperature of over 103F (39.4C)
- loss of appetite
- painful muscles
- general weakness
- feeling tired or exhausted
- feeling sick
- backache
- headache
- sore throat

Symptoms of a cold are more likely to be a runny nose, tender glands in the neck, aches and pains, and a slightly raised temperature.

Ways to prevent flu

The following points are important to ensure a good level of health:

- eating a sensible and balanced diet, with five portions of fruit and vegetables each day
- drinking plenty of water
- drinking alcohol in moderation
- taking regular exercise
- avoiding stress
- giving up smoking
- consuming garlic, vitamin C, echinacea and antioxidants

You can also avoid catching flu by washing your hands regularly and avoiding contact with someone who has, or has recently had, flu. [Read more preventing Flu on NHS online.](#)

The Flu Vaccine

You may be able to get the [flu vaccination](#) for free on the NHS if you are at higher risk of catching flu. This includes people with a serious medical condition such as:

- heart disease
- kidney disease
- lung diseases (such as bronchitis, asthma, COPD or emphysema)
- diabetes
- chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's

or other people including

- healthcare workers or carers
- people who live in a residential or nursing home
- older people who are over 65
- pregnant people
- people with a learning disability

It only takes a minute to get the flu vaccine, but it will protect you for twelve months. You will need another injection the following year. For further information contact [your GP](#) or [local Pharmacist](#).

What should you do if you catch flu?

Antibiotics can be used to treat ear and chest infections that result from flu, but there are no antibiotics that can be used to treat flu itself. The following tips might be useful if you do contract the virus:

- have bed rest. This helps to fight the infection, and in the early stages will strengthen your immune system.
- drink plenty of fluids, including hot water with lemon, honey and ginger.
- speak to your pharmacist and take aspirin, paracetamol or anti-inflammatory medication to help combat headaches, muscle pains and any fevers that have resulted.
- tell your friends and family, so that they can check on you and give you any help that you may need with daily tasks.

Read more about treating flu on [NHS](#) online.

You should contact your GP if the symptoms persist and you're not getting better after a few days, if you're unduly short of breath, or if you're coughing up blood or large amounts of yellow or green phlegm.

Other Useful Organisations

- **[NHS 111](#)** is the new telephone service which has replaced NHS Direct. You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is a fast and easy way to get the right help, whatever the time.
- **[NHS.UK](#)** is a website providing health and medicines information and you can search for local services.

Please note – The content on this website is provided for general information only, and should not be treated as a substitute for the medical advice of your own doctor or any other health care professional. If you are feeling unwell, make an appointment to see your GP or contact **[NHS 111](#)**. In an emergency, dial **999**.

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Useful Organisations

NHS

Website: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Website: www.nhs.uk/111

Public Health England

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england>

Telephone: 0300 303 8395

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[Introduction to First Aid](#)

[Walk-in centres \(Urgent Treatment Centres\)](#)

[Urgent medical help from NHS 111](#)