

People urged to get flu jab

The seasonal flu vaccination programme is under way. People are urged to get the jab if offered it. The free flu vaccine offers protection against a number of viruses which are expected to circulate this winter.

Important to get vaccinated

Everyone who gets an invitation to be vaccinated against flu should see it as a positive step in protecting their health and the health of others around them.

The vaccine changes each year to cover the strains which are likely to be around over the course of the flu season, so it's important to get immunised every year.

People aged over 65, 'at risk' children and adults, pregnant women, and pre-school children aged two years and over can get their free flu jab at their GP surgery.

Children in primaries one to seven will be offered the flu vaccine in school.

The vaccine is offered as the best protection to people over 65 and 'at risk' groups because if they get flu, they are more likely to have severe illness and/ or develop complications such as pneumonia, which can be life-threatening.

The vaccine does not give people the flu.

You can find out more at the page below:

If eligible, you should receive a letter or phone call from your GP surgery. If you think you are (or someone you know is) eligible and there hasn't been an invitation to get the jab, or if you have any queries, you should contact your GP directly.

As it takes approximately two weeks following vaccination to develop maximum protection against flu, it is important to get vaccinated early.

If you wait until flu starts circulating, it may be too late for the vaccine to protect you.

Everyone should aim to have the vaccine by early December.

Pregnant women

Pregnant women are more likely to have serious illness if they catch flu.

They will be invited at all stages of pregnancy to get the vaccine by their GP, to help protect them and their unborn baby.

Children

Pre-school and primary school children will be offered the vaccine.

Parents are asked to sign and send back the consent form to school for their primary school children, and to take up the GP's invitation for pre-school vaccination, or they may miss out.

Most children get the vaccine through a quick and painless nasal spray. The nasal vaccine has been shown to provide even greater protection for children than the flu injection.

There are a few children who cannot get the nasal spray and they will be offered the injection instead.

You can find out more on the [Flu vaccine for children page](#).

Flu symptoms

The flu virus spreads easily and quickly through the air when people cough and sneeze without covering their nose and mouth.

The same unpleasant [flu symptoms](#) are experienced by both adults and children:

- fever
- chills
- aching muscles and joints
- headache
- extreme tiredness

These symptoms can last between two and eight days and, for some, can lead to serious illness and result in a stay in hospital.

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Remember to put clocks back this weekend

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Make sure you remember to put your clocks back this weekend, as British

Summer Time ends on Sunday 28 October. You don't want to miss out on that extra hour in bed.

Reset clocks on Saturday night

You should reset your household clocks, watches and time-based equipment on Saturday night, so you don't spend Sunday trying to figure why you're early and everyone else is late. The equipment you may need to reset includes:

- clocks – especially alarm clocks
- central heating and hot water timers
- your mobile phone and computer (if their time zone settings do not instruct them to automatically take the correct local time from the internet)

Britain and Europe

British Summer Time starts on the last Sunday in March and ends on the last Sunday in October, at 1.00 am Greenwich Mean Time.

This means that:

- in autumn the clocks go back – at 2.00 am British Summer Time moves to 1.00 am Greenwich Mean Time
- in spring the clocks go forward – at 1.00 am Greenwich Mean Time moves to 2.00 am British Summer Time

Since 2002, clocks have changed on standard dates throughout the EU, making things easier for people travelling. The British Isles constantly remains an hour behind most of Central Europe.

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Be extra alert on roads during darker

months

Date published: 27 October 2017

All road users are urged to be extra alert on the roads over the coming months. We should all pay attention in the worsening weather conditions and the darker evenings during late autumn and winter.

Road safety advice

While visibility decreases in winter months, stopping distances increase. If you're a driver you should:

- adjust your [speed](#)
- think about how the conditions affect more vulnerable [road users](#)
- slow down and pay attention, especially around schools buses when children are getting on and off
- be extra careful to watch out for people walking, cycling or riding a motorbike – they are much more difficult to see, particularly in the dark

Cyclists, motorcyclists, and pedestrians (including children) should take extra precautions by making sure they increase their own visibility to drivers by wearing:

- bright or contrasting clothing by day
- reflective clothing at night

You can get more information about road safety at the page below:

Collectively, we have the ability to reduce road casualties. We all have a personal responsibility, to ourselves and to other road users.

Remember – respect everyone's journey.

More useful links

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Take steps to keep children safe from burns and scalds

It's important that parents, relatives and carers are aware of the hazards which can lead to burns and scalds, and take steps to make sure children are kept safe.

Reduce the risk of accidents

Accidents can happen quickly in or around the home, sometimes it takes just seconds, and occasionally these can lead to burns and scalds.

But these accidents can easily be prevented by being aware of the dangers and hazards that are in the home, and taking steps to reduce the risks and make the home as safe as possible.

Hot appliances, liquids, and bath water are responsible for more than half of all burns and scalds, with young children being particularly vulnerable.

Be aware that:

- hot drinks can still scald 15 minutes after they've been made and can result in years of skin graft treatment – make sure hot drinks are out of reach of babies and children
- hot water scalds in seconds – run the cold water first and always check the temperature of bath water
- hair straighteners can get very hot very quickly and cause serious burns that scar for life – keep out of the reach of children and put them away safely after use

You can get more advice, including a video showing the dangers in the home, at this link:

Prevention is always better than a cure.

More useful links

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Put safety first at Halloween

Put safety first this Halloween to make sure it's a night for treats not tragedies. Fireworks and sparklers can be dangerous, so make sure they are used safely and in line with the manufacturer's instructions. Follow the

Firework Code.

Fireworks can be dangerous

Plan any firework display in advance to make it both safe and enjoyable. Anyone wishing to buy or use fireworks must have [a licence](#).

Although fireworks are entertaining and exciting, if not properly handled they can be extremely dangerous and can result in injuries, often serious ones.

Fireworks should only be lit in a safe and controlled environment by a responsible adult. You should:

- follow the Firework Code
- only buy fireworks marked with a CE mark – this shows fireworks meet European Safety Standards
- not drink alcohol if setting off fireworks
- keep fireworks in a closed box when not in use and keep away from anything that could cause them to light
- follow the manufacturer's advice on each firework and use them one at a time
- light them at arm's length using a taper and stand well back
- never go near a firework that has been lit, even if it hasn't gone off – it could still explode
- never put fireworks in their pocket or throw them
- always supervise children around fireworks
- keep pets and animals indoors – the flames and noise upset them
- not set off noisy fireworks late at night and never after 11.00 pm

There's more information about firework safety on the page below:

Fireworks can cause fear and distress, especially amongst older people and more vulnerable members of the community.

You are also reminded of the traumatic effects that fireworks can have on pets and farm animals.

Sparklers

Sparklers are often seen as being harmless but they do burn at fierce temperatures. To a young child, the heat from a sparkler is equivalent to the heat from a welding torch.

You should:

- store sparklers in a closed box in a cool, dry place
- always light sparklers one at a time and wear gloves, keeping them at arm's length
- never hold a sparkler in their hand while also holding a baby or child
- plunge finished sparklers hot end down into a bucket of water as soon as

- they have burnt out (sparklers stay hot for a long time)
- not take sparklers to public displays – it will be too crowded to use them safely
- never give sparklers to under fives – they will not understand how to use them safely
- always supervise children using sparklers, teach them how to use them properly, and give children woollen gloves to wear

Fancy dress costumes

Parents should be aware of the potential dangers of their children wearing fancy dress costumes, either shop bought or home-made, if they're around fireworks, sparklers, or open flames (such as pumpkins with candles).

If a child is wearing a fancy dress costume this Halloween:

- keep them away from naked flames – avoid using a naked flame or candle in pumpkins; use a torch, glow stick or battery-operated candle
- stop, drop and roll if clothing does catch on fire – to try to put the flames out and also to stop the flames from rising towards the face
- choose a costume and mask that doesn't restrict a child's visibility or vision
- make sure they wear woollen tights or 'heavy' trousers (jeans) and a woollen jumper under the costume
- supervise them well at all times

Look out for costumes that are labelled 'Low Flammability' 'BS5722' or have the European code 'BS EN 14878'.

Fireworks and the law

Fireworks must be bought from a licensed dealer, who is required to keep sales records.

Fireworks bought from other sources could be of a sub-standard quality, presenting an even bigger risk of injury. It is also essential that you have a licence when buying any fireworks.

You can find a list of licensed dealers on the [fireworks page](#).

For any enquiries on the use of fireworks or if you need help with applying for a licence, [phone the fireworks helpline](#).

More useful links