

# Flu Vaccination and Mental Illness

## An important message for mental health teams

People living with a mental illness and their carers and families may be eligible for a free flu vaccination from the NHS.

It is vital that mental health services ensure people with a mental illness who are entitled to a free flu vaccination are offered one. This should be offered proactively, with support provided if it's needed to get and attend an appointment.

### The list of people eligible for a free flu vaccination this year includes:

- People aged 50 and over and people who will be 50 by 31 March 2021
- Pregnant women
- People in long-stay residential care
- Frontline health or social care workers
- People who receive a carer's allowance, or are the main carer for an older or disabled person who may be at risk if they get sick
- People who live with someone [who's at high risk from coronavirus](#) (on the NHS shielded patient list)



It also includes people with a number of long-term health conditions. The NHS lists these as including:

- respiratory conditions, such as [asthma](#) (needing steroid inhaler or tablets), [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease](#) (COPD), including emphysema and [bronchitis](#)
- [diabetes](#)
- heart conditions, such as [coronary heart disease](#) or [heart failure](#)
- being very overweight – a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or above
- [chronic kidney disease](#)
- liver disease, such as [hepatitis](#)
- neurological conditions, such as [Parkinson's disease](#), [motor neurone disease](#), [multiple sclerosis \(MS\)](#), or [cerebral palsy](#)
- [a learning disability](#)
- problems with your spleen, for example, [sickle cell disease](#), or if you have had your spleen removed
- a weakened immune system as the result of conditions such as [HIV and AIDS](#), or taking medicines such as [steroid tablets](#) or [chemotherapy](#)



People with a mental illness are more likely to have many of these conditions and be eligible for a free flu jab.

Some people may have fears about the vaccination. We recommend enquiring, listening to their concerns and discussing with them. It's important to find out if they need extra support to attend. It can sometimes just be a case of discussing the vaccination and talking through fears or anxieties. Some people might need their carer to receive the information too.

It's also important to ensure anyone who's an inpatient in a mental health hospital and is eligible for flu vaccination gets their flu jab this year.

No one should miss out on basic health care because of a mental illness. Too many people do. This year more than ever it's vital to reach out to everyone who is eligible for their flu jab.



*'If the vaccination was explained to me, I could see it helping my fears.'*  
**Expert by Experience**



*'I try to combine appointments where possible and provide tailored support for the individual.'* **Clinician**



*'When in hospital I noticed staff receiving the vaccination so I enquired if I could also have one, it was only then that it was offered.'*  
**Expert by Experience**

This resource has been created with input from the Equally Well UK Expert by Experience and Clinical group and supported by NHS England and Improvement, Public Health England and Mind.