



Say No to Infection Immunisation for Care Staff Fact Sheet

What is Immunisation?

Immunisation protects against infectious diseases. The process by which a person is made resistant to a particular disease by administration of a vaccine. Vaccination is the most important thing we can do to protect ourselves against ill health. Vaccines prevent up to 3 million deaths worldwide every year.

Since vaccines were introduced in the UK, diseases like smallpox, polio and tetanus that used to kill or disable millions of people are either gone or seen very rarely.

Other diseases like measles and diphtheria have been reduced by up to 99.9% since their vaccines were introduced.

However, if people stop having vaccines, it's possible for infectious diseases to quickly spread again.

How do vaccines work?

Vaccines teach the immune system how to create antibodies that protect you from diseases.

It is much safer for the immune system to learn this through vaccination than by catching the disease and treating it.

Things you need to know about vaccines

Vaccines do

- Protect you from many serious and potentially deadly diseases.
- Protect other people in your community – by helping to stop diseases spreading to people who cannot have vaccines.
- Undergo rigorous safety testing before being introduced – they're also constantly monitored for side effects after being introduced.
- Sometimes cause mild side effects that will not last long.
- Reduce or even get rid of some diseases – if enough people are vaccinated.

Vaccines don't

- **Do not** cause autism – studies have found no evidence of a link between the MMR vaccine and autism.
- Do not overload or weaken the immune system – it's safe to give several vaccines at a time and this reduces the number of injections needed.
- Do not cause allergies or any other conditions – all the current evidence tells us that vaccinating is safer than not vaccinating. Do not contain mercury (thiomersal).
- Do not contain any ingredients that cause harm in such small amounts.

Staff immunisations

It is important for care staff members to keep up to date with routine immunisations e.g., tetanus, diphtheria, polio, and the MMR. In addition, for staff members who have an increased risk of exposure to blood borne viruses it is recommended that they have immunisations against Hepatitis B Virus (**staff of residential & other accommodation for those with Learning Disabilities**).

It is recommended that staff are aware of their chickenpox status (varicella).

Why it's important to get your COVID vaccination.

If you are a frontline worker working in social care, you are more likely to be exposed to COVID 19 at work. Health care workers and those working in social care (particularly in care homes) are at much higher risk of repeated exposure to the infection.

Catching COVID 19 can be serious and may lead to long term complications. These are more common in older staff or those with underlying clinical risk factors.

You can have COVID 19 without any symptoms and pass it on to family, friends, and residents/service users, many of whom may be at increased risk from COVID 19.

Being healthy doesn't reduce your risk of catching COVID 19 or passing it on.

With high rates of COVID 19, it's more important than ever to help stop the spread of coronavirus, to avoid pressure on the NHS and to keep the health and social care workforce healthy.

Influenza vaccine

Care workers are caring and supporting people at a much higher risk from flu, so it is important that they help protect themselves and those receiving care against flu.

Every year there are flu outbreaks in care homes and other care settings despite high flu vaccination rates for residents. This is partly due to age and immune response to the vaccination. This makes vaccination of staff caring for these people even more important.

Vaccination reduces the spread of flu amongst staff, which helps to reduce staff flu related illness and the need to provide agency cover.

The vaccination is required every year

Flu viruses change over time. The vaccines are made each year in advance of the flu season and protect against the strains of the virus that are most likely to circulate that year.

The best time to have a flu vaccine is in the autumn, before flu starts to circulate.

The Health and Social Care Act 2022: code of practice, states that the control of the flu virus includes immunisation.

Employers are responsible for ensuring that their employees are offered a flu vaccine. Employers can direct their staff to receive the flu vaccination free of charge through the NHS complementary scheme.