

Say No to Infection Fact Sheet for Immunisation (65+)



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.

Once the immune system knows how to fight a disease, it can often protect you for many years.

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

Immunisation for over 65's (pneumococcal vaccine, Influenza, coronavirus (Covid 19, shingles)

Pneumococcal Vaccine – The vaccine protects against serious and potentially fatal pneumococcal infections. It's also known as the pneumonia vaccine.

Pneumococcal infections are caused by the bacterium streptococcus pneumoniae and can lead to pneumonia, blood poisoning (sepsis) and meningitis.

At their worse, they can cause permanent brain damage, or even kill.

Influenza (flu) and Coronavirus (COVID 19) vaccine – this vaccine is important because:

- If you get flu and COVID 19 at the same time, research shows you're more likely to be seriously ill.
- Getting vaccinated against flu and COVID 19 will provide protection for you and those around you for both serious illnesses.

If you've had COVID 19, its **safe** to have the flu vaccine. It will be effective at helping to prevent flu.

Shingle's vaccine – This is a vaccine to prevent shingles, a common, painful skin disease, is available on the NHS to people in their 70's. Some people are left with pain lasting for years after the initial rash has healed. Shingles can also be fatal for around 1 in 1,000 who develop it.

The shingles vaccine is expected to reduce the risk of getting shingles. If you do go on to have the disease, the symptoms may be milder and the illness shorter.

It's fine to have the shingles vaccine if you've already had shingles. The shingles vaccine works very well in people who have had shingles before, and it will boost your immunity against further shingles attacks. The GP will tell you how long to wait after you recover from shingles before having the shingles vaccine. This may be up to 1 year.

Immunisation for over 75's Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

RSV is a common respiratory lungs and airways illness. RSV infection is more common from late autumn to early spring but can happen at any time of the year.

RSV infection can cause severe respiratory infections like pneumonia, it can also cause over life threatening conditions.

The RSV vaccine helps to protect a person by reducing their chances of getting an RSV infection. The vaccine is not a live vaccine and does not cause an RSV infection. A single dose will help to boost protection as a person reaches an age group at highest risk of RSV infection. Unlike the Flu vaccine, you do not need to have the RSV vaccine every year.

The RSV vaccine helps to build up the immunity to the virus which means a person's body will fight off the infection more easily.

Everyone turning 75 or older on or after the 1st of September 2024 will be offered a single dose vaccine. A person can still get the vaccine up to the day before they turn 80.