

Scottish Vaccination and Immunisation Programme

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Lines to take – Winter Flu and COVID-19 Vaccination 2024

- Decision-making on Scotland's vaccination programme is guided by the independent, expert advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).
- On 2 August 2024 the JCVI published its advice on a COVID-19 vaccination programme for this winter: [JCVI advises on eligible groups for autumn COVID-19 vaccination - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/jcvi-advises-on-eligible-groups-for-autumn-covid-19-vaccination)
- The Spring COVID-19 vaccination programme ran from 1st April – 30th June 2024.
- Last winter's COVID-19 and flu vaccination programme ran from 4 September 2023 to 31 March 2024. PHS data shows a decrease in COVID-19 and flu vaccine uptake for all eligible groups this past winter compared to winter 2022-23, notably in occupational groups, such as health and social care workers, and pregnant women.
- Public Health Scotland welcomes the advice from the JCVI that, to maximise protection in those most vulnerable to serious illness, COVID-19 vaccines should be offered to certain priority groups this winter. Prioritising those most at risk has been the focus from the outset.

Flu and COVID-19 vaccination for adults

- The groups below are eligible for both COVID-19 and flu vaccines this winter:
 - Residents in care homes for older adults
 - Those aged 65+
 - 6 months – 64 at COVID clinical risk
 - Staff in care homes for older adults
 - Frontline health and social care workers
 - Pregnant women at any stage of pregnancy (first, second or third trimesters)

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Flu only vaccination administration for adults

- The groups below are eligible for their flu vaccines this winter
 - 18-64 years with an eligible flu-only clinical risk condition
 - Carers (including unpaid and young carers)
 - Non-frontline NHS workers
 - Household contacts of those with immunosuppression
 - Asylum seekers living in Home Office hotel or B&B accommodation
 - Those experiencing homelessness
 - Those experiencing substance misuse
 - All prisoners within the Scottish prison estate
 - Those living in long-stay residential care homes or other long stay care facilities
 - Poultry workers
- Vaccination is required every year because flu viruses are constantly changing and immunity may wane. The vaccines offered this year will give you the best possible protection against the viruses likely to be circulating this winter.
- JCVI flu advice - [JCVI Statement on Influenza Vaccines 2024-25 updated 20240612.pdf | Powered by Box](#)
- Flu vaccines are available to purchase privately for those who are not eligible under the national programme and many employers offer vaccination.

Winter 2024 vaccination appointments

- If you're eligible, you'll receive a letter, SMS or email with appointment details or information about how to book one, depending on communication preferences. Please wait to be contacted. Please attend the appointment you've been given, or make or rearrange your appointment as soon as possible.
- Vaccination will be offered to those at high risk of serious illness from flu and COVID-19. If you're eligible, you'll be contacted with information about your appointment.

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- Winter vaccine appointments will be available for all those eligible. If you're having difficulty finding an appointment on the booking portal, please wait a few days and try again.
- Appointments will be available right the way through to January 2025 for COVID-19 and March 2025 for flu ensuring all those eligible are protected before flu and COVID-19 viruses are most likely to be circulating.
- More information is available on [Winter vaccines | NHS inform](#), including a self-help guide that helps you to find out about the vaccines you may be eligible for, and how you'll be offered them.
- You can [rearrange your appointment](#) if the time or day you've been given doesn't suit you. There may be evening and weekend vaccination clinics available too. If it's more convenient, you can book or reschedule your appointment to a vaccination clinic closer to where you work or somewhere you visit regularly. This can be anywhere in Scotland.
- If you're trying to rearrange your appointment online and there are no vaccination appointments available, please check again later as appointments regularly become available. The national vaccination helpline will be unable to offer alternative appointments as they use the same online booking system. You can also contact your local health board, details of which can be found at [Local health board vaccination information | NHS inform](#)
- Post-pandemic, the flu and COVID-19 programme is smaller, with only those at higher risk being offered vaccinations. This reduction means that we do not have the same number of venues or spare appointment capacity.
- Although there are still a range of vaccination sites available in each health board, there may be fewer spare appointments available, so you may not be able to find an earlier appointment than the one you have been offered.
- To avoid delays in receiving your vaccination, it's best to arrive as close as possible to your appointment time. The appointment system ensures queues are kept to a

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minimum. For those unable to queue, additional seating can be arranged. Please ask a staff member for any support you require when you arrive. If you need additional support at your appointment, for example, someone to support you when you arrive or a private space to be vaccinated, please call the national vaccination helpline on 0800 030 8013, who will pass the request to your local health board.

- We try to offer people vaccination appointments as close to home as possible. You can [reschedule your appointment](#) or change the location.
- We are working at pace to deliver the winter vaccination programme and appreciate your understanding.

Health and social care workers (HSCWs)

- Frontline HSCWs are eligible for flu vaccination this winter in line with the JCVI advice and Green Book definition.
- We also continue to offer flu vaccination to non-frontline NHS workers as part of the national programme, as a Scottish Government policy decision.
- This winter the JCVI has not advised COVID-19 vaccination for frontline HSCWs workers, although it has noted that *“Health and social care service providers may wish to consider whether vaccination provided as an occupational health programme is appropriate. Ahead of such considerations, health departments may choose to continue to extend an offer of vaccination to frontline health and social care workers and staff working in care homes for older adults in autumn 2024.”*
- Scottish Government has made the policy decision to include frontline HSCWs and staff working in care homes for older adults for COVID-19 vaccination this winter
- Vaccination of staff groups will protect health services from staff absences during the winter months.
- Information regarding definitions of frontline HSCWs can be found in the Influenza Green Book. Further detail about who is eligible for vaccination as part of this group has been sent to health boards.

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Vaccine lines – general

- NHS Scotland will only use a vaccine if it meets the required standards of safety and effectiveness. All medicines, including vaccines, are tested for safety and effectiveness before they're allowed to be used.
- The JCVI advise that all available vaccines provide strong protection against severe illness from COVID-19.
- Although the JCVI has noted that the optimum protection from the COVID-19 vaccines is during the first 3 months after vaccination, vaccines continue to offer protection after this point.
- Protection from the COVID-19 vaccines does not stop after 3 months, but slowly starts to fade.
- All COVID-19 vaccines available as part of the Scottish winter programme provide good protection against severe illness from COVID-19.

Vaccinating additional groups or revaccinating

- The JCVI no longer advises COVID-19 vaccination of those under the age of 65 who do not have any underlying health conditions.
- The JCVI advises flu vaccination for all those aged 65 and over. Those aged 50-64 have been eligible for a flu vaccination for the previous two winters, as an additional cohort during the COVID-19 pandemic. As of this winter, those aged 50-64 are no longer included as an eligible group, as we have moved beyond the pandemic period. Similarly, nursery, primary and secondary school teachers and pupil facing support staff are no longer included as an eligible group for flu vaccination.
- There are currently no plans to increase or expand the groups eligible for COVID-19 vaccination.

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- Any decision on expanding COVID-19 eligibility or re-vaccination of certain groups would be a decision for the JCVI and we would of course stand ready to assess any further recommendations from them.
- The main aim of the COVID-19 programme is the prevention of severe illness, hospitalisations and deaths from COVID-19.
- Currently, those most at risk are in older age groups, those in care homes and those with particular clinical conditions that make them more vulnerable to COVID-19-related illness.
- In those who aren't eligible this year, many people have a level of protection against COVID-19 from previous vaccination or infection.

Carers and household contacts

- This winter, the JCVI does not recommend COVID-19 vaccination for unpaid carers or the household contacts of those with a weakened immune system.
- Up until this point, these two groups have been included in previous COVID-19 winter programmes.
- The primary aim of the vaccination programme is the prevention of severe illness (hospitalisations and deaths) arising from COVID-19.
- The focus of the programme is offering COVID-19 vaccination to those most likely to directly benefit from vaccination, which is those in older age groups and those with underlying health conditions that increase their risk.
- In autumn 2024 we have good levels of population immunity and the current Omicron era has less disease severity compared with earlier variants.
- We understand why carers may want to seek vaccination in order to protect loved ones from COVID-19, but the current vaccines provide very limited impact on transferring the virus from one person to the other (transmission).

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- We understand that carers may wish to seek COVID-19 vaccination to prevent themselves from becoming ill and being unable to care for those they look after, but the current vaccines do not prevent a person from catching COVID-19. What they do is prevent severe illness, hospitalisation and death. Those carers who are not considered “at risk” by the JCVI, by virtue of age or clinical condition, should experience much less severe symptoms than earlier in the pandemic, should they contract COVID-19.
- Unpaid carers and household contacts of those with a weakened immune system remain eligible for flu vaccination this winter.

Private COVID-19 vaccination

- Pharmacy companies in the UK offer private sales of COVID-19 vaccine.
- Private sales of COVID-19 vaccines are not controlled or managed by NHS Scotland or Scottish Government.
- NHS Scotland does not have any responsibility over which pharmacies offer private COVID-19 vaccines, which vaccine types they stock or what they charge.
- Private sales are managed by arrangements between pharmacy companies and vaccine manufacturers.
- NHS Scotland continues to offer the COVID-19 vaccine to those eligible this winter, free of charge, as recommended by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

Opting out of a flu or COVID-19 vaccine

- If you previously opted out of a flu and/or COVID-19 vaccine, this meant that we would no longer send you a scheduled appointment for these vaccinations. You may have since received an invitation letter, text or email informing you of your eligibility for the winter vaccination programme, prompting you to book if you wish to do so. This is because NHS Scotland has a duty of care to inform you of the vaccines available to you.

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- If you wish to opt out of all further communications about the flu and/or COVID-19 vaccine, please call 0800 030 8013. Please note that the way the IT system is built, you cannot opt out of one vaccine only. For example, if you are still interested in getting your flu vaccine, but not your COVID-19 vaccine, you should not opt out. When offered a COVID-19 vaccine at a future flu appointment, you can simply decline this.
- If you are eligible for any other vaccine programmes, you will still be invited for those.

Additional information

'How to' videos have been developed to help with the booking portal:

Videos
How to book your vaccine appointment online
How to reschedule your vaccine appointment online
How to recover your username and password
How to update your personal details and communication preferences

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Eligibility Table

Group	Covid	Flu
65+	Yes	Yes
Residents in care homes for older adults	Yes	Yes
6 months – 64 years at Covid-19 clinical risk	Yes	Yes
Staff in care homes for older adults	Yes*	Yes
Frontline HSCWs	Yes*	Yes
Non-frontline NHS workers	No	Yes*
18-64 years with an eligible flu-only clinical risk condition	No	Yes
Unpaid carers (including young carers)	No	Yes
Household contacts of those with immunosuppression	No	Yes
Asylum seekers living in Home Office hotel or B&B accommodation	No	Yes*
Those experiencing homelessness	No	Yes
Those experiencing substance misuse	No	Yes*
All prisoners within the Scottish prison estate	No	Yes
Poultry workers	No	Yes

* SG Policy decision – not advised by JCVI

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Related links

- [JCVI advice on winter COVID-19 vaccination – Public Health Scotland](#)
- [PHS reiterates the importance of maintaining high vaccination uptake rates in Scotland - News - Public Health Scotland](#)
- [Winter COVID-19 and flu vaccination uptake - News - Public Health Scotland](#)

Please also see links below to the JCVI announcement issued on the 2nd August.

- [JCVI advises on eligible groups for autumn COVID-19 vaccination - GOV.UK \(\[www.gov.uk\]\(http://www.gov.uk\)\)](#)
- [Government accepts advice on 2024 autumn Covid vaccine programme - GOV.UK \(\[www.gov.uk\]\(http://www.gov.uk\)\)](#)
- [COVID-19 autumn 2024 vaccination programme: JCVI advice, 8 April 2024 - GOV.UK \(\[www.gov.uk\]\(http://www.gov.uk\)\)](#)

Other relevant links

- [Flu and COVID-19 vaccination uptake – dataset](#)