



Briefing for pharmacy teams – the NHS Childhood Flu Vaccination Service

This Community Pharmacy England Briefing provides information for pharmacy teams on the NHS Childhood Flu Vaccination Service.



It is being commissioned as an Advanced service for a one-season trial of administering flu vaccinations to children aged 2 and 3 years **from 1st October 2025**.

An evaluation of the impact of community pharmacy's participation in this vaccination programme after the 2025/26 season will inform NHS policy decisions around whether the service will be commissioned in future years.

Aim of the service

The aim of the seasonal influenza vaccination programme is to protect those who are most at risk of serious illness or death should they develop influenza, by offering protection against the most prevalent strains of influenza virus. This helps to reduce unplanned hospital admissions and pressures on urgent and emergency care and as such, it is a key factor in the resilience of the NHS during winter.





Vaccinating eligible children not only provides individual protection for the child but can help reduce transmission of the disease to the wider population, including those who are at higher risk of getting seriously ill from flu.

Last season, the uptake in children aged 2 and 3 years showed a decline in vaccination rates. To improve access and uptake across the country, NHS England has decided to commission a new Advanced service for community pharmacies to provide seasonal influenza vaccinations to all children aged 2 and 3 years of age on 31st August 2025 (born between 1st September 2021 and 31st August 2023).

Overview of the service


- The service commences on **1st October 2025** and will run until 31st March 2026. **Vaccines must not be administered in community pharmacies before 1st October.**
- All children aged 2 and 3 years old are eligible, including those in a clinical risk group.
- Last season, 1.2 million children were eligible for a flu vaccine and uptake rates in general practice have been just over 40% for several years, with a slight decline year on year.
- The service can be provided by a pharmacist or a pharmacy technician or any other health care professional able to vaccinate under a patient group direction provided the service is under the oversight of the Responsible Pharmacist.
- There are two vaccines that will be used for the service. The first line vaccine is a nasal spray flu vaccine. This is the same vaccine used in general practice and the school vaccination services.



- The nasal spray flu vaccine is given as a quick and painless nasal spray in each nostril.
- Nasal spray flu vaccines will be ordered from NHS central stocks and orders will be primarily based on the number of booked appointments.
- Parents and carers who want to have their eligible child / children vaccinated can [book an appointment online](#) or in the [NHS App](#). Your pharmacy will also have to offer walk-in vaccinations at certain times of the week. Speak to your pharmacy manager to confirm your pharmacy's plans.
- Where the nasal spray flu vaccine is medically not suitable or is otherwise unsuitable (e.g. parents or carers object because the nasal spray vaccine contains a small amount of gelatine from pigs (porcine gelatine)), a flu vaccine injection will be offered. This is given as an injection into the upper arm or thigh. 
- Children are offered one dose of the vaccine each season. Some children, under certain circumstances, will need two doses of the vaccine. Where a second dose is required, this will be offered at least 4 weeks after their first dose.
- Children who require a second dose are those who have not had a flu vaccine in any previous flu season and are in a clinical risk group or who are household contacts of individuals with immunosuppression. 
- Parents and carers can use the '[Find a pharmacy that offers free flu vaccination](#)' to identify pharmacies that are providing the service.
- Once vaccinated, information relating to the vaccination will be shared electronically with the child's general practice.
- Pharmacy owners must have a standard operating procedure (SOP) in place for this service and all pharmacy staff involved in any aspect of provision of the service must be familiar with and adhere to the SOP.

Frequently asked questions

Q. What role can I play in the service?

The whole pharmacy team can be involved in promoting this service and can highlight the availability of the service to parents and carers who visit the pharmacy. Pharmacy team members can also be involved in agreeing the date and time of a child's vaccination and can assist parents and carers with booking an appointment. 

Q. Can children of other ages who may be eligible for a vaccination also use the service?

No. At this stage, only children aged 2 and 3 years can be vaccinated under the pharmacy service. Children of other ages who are eligible for NHS flu vaccinations can be vaccinated by their general practice or under the school vaccination service.

Further information on the Childhood Flu Vaccination Service can be found at cpe.org.uk/childhoodflu.