



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 has been commissioned as an Advanced service **from 1st October 2026** to support the administering of flu vaccinations to:

- All children aged 2 and 3 years of age on 31st August 2026 (born between 1st September 2022 and 31st August 2024);
- Children aged 4 years to under 18 years and at clinical risk due to a health condition or who are in another defined risk group e.g. homeless or a young carer etc.; and
- School-age children from Reception to Year 11 (from 1st December 2026) as a catch-up programme.

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. This helps to reduce unplanned hospital admissions and pressures on urgent and emergency care and it can help reduce transmission of the disease to the wider population.



Overview of the service

- The service commences on **1st October 2026** and will run until 31st March 2027.
- From **1st December 2026**, the service will also provide an opportunity for a catch-up flu vaccination to school-age children (from Reception to Year 11) who missed their flu vaccine at school.
- 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. Alternatively, the service can be provided under a Vaccine Group Direction with vaccines administered by any suitably trained staff with a pharmacist or pharmacy technician operating as the clinician.
- 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 Aged Immunisation 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.
- 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), a flu vaccine injection will be offered. This is given as an injection into the upper arm or thigh. 
- Most 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](#) webpage 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 any age who may be eligible for a vaccination use the service?

No. The service can only be provided to children aged 2 and 3 years and those aged 4 to under 18 years old and at clinical risk due to a long-term health condition or in another defined risk group e.g. homeless or a young carer etc.

Children between 6 months and younger than 2 years of age who are clinically at risk due to a health condition are eligible to be vaccinated by their general practice.

School-aged children (from Reception to Year 11) who are not clinically at risk due to a health condition will be vaccinated by the School Aged Immunisation Service. Community pharmacies will be able to offer vaccinations to children who miss their vaccines at school from 1st December 2026.

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