Protect yourself and the people you care for this winter

This autumn/winter, the NHS is preparing for a bad flu season alongside rising cases of COVID-19, which is why taking up any offer of flu or COVID-19 booster vaccines is so important.

Vaccines are the best protection for you and for those you care for from these deadly viruses – please get yours booked today.

Here are some common questions and concerns about the flu and COVID-19 vaccines. Find the answers to these on the next page.

I don't need to bother with the flu vaccine - the COVID-19 booster is more important.

I don't need the flu vaccine if I've had the COVID-19 vaccine – that covers me for flu anyway.

Do I even need a COVID booster after having both my vaccines?

I don't mind 1 or 2 vaccines, but 4 is a bit much.

It doesn't feel right for me to have a 3rd COVID-19 booster when large parts of the world have not even had a first dose.

Flu isn't a big deal compared with COVID-19.

I'm not in a vulnerable group so I don't need the flu vaccine.

I'm concerned about the effects of the COVID-19 vaccine on my fertility and baby's health.

I'm concerned about the side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine.

I don't need to bother with the flu vaccine - the COVID-19 booster is more important.

While getting your COVID-19 vaccination and booster is important, do not underestimate how dangerous the flu virus is.

Flu can cause severe illness and even death among vulnerable groups. In an average year over 11,000 people in England die from flu.

And if you get flu and COVID-19 at the same time, you're more likely to become seriously ill.

The COVID-19 booster does not protect against the flu virus. Getting vaccinated against **both** flu and COVID-19 will provide the best protection for you and those around you from both these serious illnesses.

I don't need the flu vaccine if I've had the COVID-19 vaccine – that covers me for flu anyway.

The COVID-19 booster does not protect against the flu virus.

It is important to have both your flu vaccine and to get your COVID-19 booster.

Vaccination reduces the spread of flu among staff as well as the people receiving care and support. Getting your flu vaccination will help to keep our care services running and reduce the burden on the NHS during the winter.

Do I even need a COVID booster after having both my vaccines?

Vaccines are the way out of this pandemic. Having both your COVID-19 vaccinations is the best way to avoid getting COVID-19 with symptoms and becoming seriously ill.

Even if you've had both your vaccines, the COVID booster is important as it prolongs the protection that the vaccine offers, which is important for those most at risk as we approach the winter months.

I don't mind 1 or 2 vaccines, but 4 is a bit much.

This winter we are preparing for a bad flu season alongside rising cases of COVID-19. This is because fewer people will have built up natural immunity to flu during the COVID-19 pandemic, and protective measures like social distancing and mask wearing haven't been mandatory.

While 4 jabs may feel like a lot, it's important to have the right number of jabs at the right time to provide the protection you need from these viruses.

The first 2 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine are essential in providing protection from the virus. The 3rd COVID booster is being offered now to prolong the protection you get from the vaccine to help prevent a more serious outbreak of Covid this winter.

New flu vaccines are produced every year to protect against the strains most likely to be in circulation, which is why you need to get vaccinated every year.

It doesn't feel right for me to have a 3rd COVID-19 booster when large parts of the world have not even had a first dose.

COVID-19 is a global problem and vaccines are our best route out of the pandemic. The UK has announced it will donate 100 million vaccine doses to developing countries, through the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access facility (Covax), within the next year.

Getting fully vaccinated helps to reduce the chances of you becoming seriously ill or dying from COVID-19 and also reduces the risk of you catching or spreading the virus to other people.

The NHS is urging everyone called forward for vaccination to take up the offer as soon as possible.

This winter we must protect ourselves and our healthcare system against the combined risks of a bad flu season and another COVID-19 outbreak.

Flu isn't a big deal compared with COVID-19.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has been deadly, it's important that we don't underestimate how dangerous the flu virus is.

Flu can cause severe illness and even death among vulnerable groups, as well as complications like bronchitis and pneumonia.

In an average year over 11,000 people in England die from flu, and this year with the combined risks of a bad flu season plus COVID-19, it's more important than ever that you get both your flu vaccine and COVID-19 booster to protect yourself and those you care for.

I'm not in a vulnerable group so I don't need the flu vaccine.

Even if you are fit and healthy and don't think you are vulnerable to flu, remember that flu doesn't discriminate. Anyone can get the flu, and you can pass the flu virus onto others who are vulnerable.

Flu vaccination for all health and social care staff that are directly working with people who are

clinically vulnerable to flu is especially important this winter.

I'm concerned about the effects of the COVID-19 vaccine on my fertility and baby's health.

The NHS will not offer any vaccinations to the public until independent experts have signed off that it is safe to do so. The MHRA, the official UK regulator, has said the COVID-19 vaccines are safe and highly effective.

COVID-19 vaccines offer pregnant women the best protection against COVID-19 disease which can be serious in later pregnancy for some women.

As pregnancy progresses to the third trimester, if unvaccinated, women are at a greater risk of becoming seriously unwell. This can affect both the health of mother and baby.

COVID-19 vaccines do not contain ingredients that are known to be harmful to pregnant women or to a developing baby. Studies of the vaccines in animals to look at the effects on pregnancy have shown no evidence that the vaccine causes harm to the pregnancy or to fertility.

There is no evidence that the Covid-19 vaccine affects fertility, and there is no biologically plausible mechanism by which current vaccines would cause any impact on women's fertility.

I'm concerned about the side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine.

The Covid-19 vaccines are safe and effective for the vast majority of people – they have been tested on tens of thousands of people and assessed by experts.

Side effects are important details which the MHRA always consider when assessing candidate vaccines for use.

When you have had the Covid-19 vaccination, you may have some mild side effects. These can include:

- a sore arm where the needle went in
- feeling tired
- a headache
- feeling achy

You can take painkillers, such as paracetamol, to prevent and relieve any symptoms. If your symptoms get worse or you are worried, call 111.

More information on possible side effects can be found here.