

When the European Commission licensed the vaccines (Pandemrix and Celvapan), they carefully considered all the evidence. The vaccines have been recommended by the European Medicines Agency. Also, similar vaccines containing another flu virus strain (H5N1) have been clinically tested in trials involving over 5,000 people. The trials show that people tolerate the vaccines well. Experience with seasonal flu vaccines has shown that changing the strain of virus in a vaccine does not substantially affect the safety profile.

Is the vaccine safe for pregnant women?

Both of the vaccines (Pandemrix and Celvapan) are licensed for use for pregnant women. Pregnant women are recommended to have the swine flu vaccine because they are considerably more likely to develop serious complications

and be hospitalised from swine flu. The risks of complications are highest in the later stages of pregnancy. They include miscarriage and premature labour. Having the swine flu vaccine now could help you avoid catching swine flu and protect your baby.

Do I still need the swine flu vaccine if I've already had swine flu?

Many people think they've had swine flu when they haven't. Unless lab testing confirmed that you definitely had swine flu, you should still have the vaccination. When it comes to protecting you, your family and those you care for and support, it's better to be safe than sorry.

What should I do now?

Talk to your manager or employer to find out how to get your swine flu vaccination. For more information go to: www.direct.gov.uk/swineflu

For details of where and when to get your vaccine, please contact:

[insert local info here]



SWINE FLU

IF YOU CAN'T CATCH IT, YOU CAN'T PASS IT ON

The vaccine is available for frontline social care workers - get your job now. FLU. PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS.



What is swine flu?

Swine flu is a respiratory disease caused by a new strain of influenza virus. The seasonal flu vaccines that are already available don't protect against swine flu, so a new flu vaccine has been developed.

Frontline social care workers are being offered the swine flu vaccine as a priority.

Stopping the spread of the swine flu pandemic is a critical priority for all of us. Being vaccinated against swine flu is the easiest way to protect yourself, your family and those you care for and support. The vaccine will make sure you are not infectious to anyone, so you can safely carry on with your normal duties.

Am I eligible?

If you are a social care worker who is employed to provide personal care to children or adults, either in care homes or in the community, then you are eligible for priority vaccination.

'Personal care' is defined as physical assistance, or prompting and supervision where a

person is unable to make these decisions for themselves, with:

- eating or drinking
- toileting (including in relation to the process of menstruation)
- washing or bathing
- dressing
- oral care, or
- the care of skin, hair and nails (with the exception of nail care provided by a chiropodist or podiatrist)

Who is most at risk from swine flu?

The vaccine is also being offered as a priority to people who are most likely to become seriously ill if they catch swine flu. These people are in the following at risk groups:

1. Adults and children over six months of age who have certain long-term health conditions
2. Pregnant women at any stage of pregnancy
3. People who live in the same house as someone whose immune system is compromised by disease or treatment

How serious is swine flu?

For most people, swine flu is mild. It comes on quickly and generally lasts for around a week. It causes a fever, tiredness, a cough and a sore throat. Other symptoms can include a headache, aching muscles, chills, sneezing, a runny nose, loss of appetite, vomiting and diarrhoea.

Many of the people you care for and support could become seriously ill if they catch swine flu.

Some people are more likely to become seriously ill if they catch swine flu. These may well include people you care for and support who have long-term health conditions, who are pregnant or whose immune system is affected by a disease or treatment for a disease. If they catch swine flu, they may need to go to hospital and, in the very worst cases, some may die.

It is important that you have the vaccine to prevent you, your family and the people you care for and support from catching swine flu.

Is it the same as the seasonal flu vaccination?

No. The swine flu vaccine is different from the seasonal flu vaccination that's offered every year. The seasonal flu vaccine does not protect against swine flu. If you are usually advised to have the seasonal flu vaccination, you should have it as well.

The seasonal flu vaccine does not protect against swine flu. It's safe to have both vaccinations at the same time.

Are there any side-effects?

All vaccinations can produce side-effects such as redness, soreness and swelling at the site of the injection. Some people may experience mild flu-like symptoms like fever, a headache and muscle aches for up to 48 hours after immunisation as their immune system responds to the vaccine, but this is not the flu.

The vaccine is not live and cannot cause swine flu. The vaccine won't make you infectious to anyone, so it is safe to carry on with your normal duties.