

## **Inflammatory Conditions and Vaccination against Flu**

Vaccination is an important step in protecting your health, especially if you have inflammatory conditions and are taking medication that can suppress your immune system (a part of the body that fights off infection).

People with inflammatory conditions are at an increased risk of getting unwell if they get flu (also called influenza). Sometimes flu can be complicated by pneumonia, a serious form of chest infection.

### **Why Are vaccines important for people with inflammatory conditions?**

Inflammatory conditions and medications such as steroids, methotrexate, and biologics that are used to treat them increase the risk of getting unwell with flu. This happens because these medicines weaken the body's ability to fight infection.

The flu vaccine has long been recommended for people with inflammatory conditions who are taking medications that can suppress their immune system. However, many people in the UK don't take it. Among people with inflammatory rheumatic condition, flu vaccine was taken by:

- approximately 5 in 10 people aged between 18 and up to 44 years,
- approximately 6 in 10 people aged between 45 and 65 years, and
- approximately 8 in 10 people older than 65 years in a year.

In people with inflammatory bowel disease, flu vaccine was taken by:

- approximately 4 in 10 people aged between 18 and up to 44 years
- approximately 4 in 10 people aged between 45 and 65 years, and
- approximately 5 in 10 people older than 65 years in a year.

### **Vaccination against seasonal influenza**

The flu jab (also called influenza vaccine) can boost your defences and protect against flu and its complications that may require hospital treatment.

### **Am I eligible?**

If you are taking medications that suppress the immune system, you are eligible for receiving the flu vaccine. Talk to your GP or hospital team if you have not had already had this jab, or if you wish to discuss this further.

### **I am concerned that the flu vaccine can cause my inflammatory condition to flare-up.**

Researchers at The University of Nottingham explored the association between

- flu vaccination and a flare-up of inflammatory rheumatic conditions (such as rheumatoid arthritis, spondylarthritis and lupus), and
- flu vaccination and a flare-up of inflammatory bowel disease.

They found no relationship between vaccination against flu and people seeking NHS help for managing a flare-up for these conditions. A limitation of the research is that it only looked at people seeking NHS help for managing flare, minor flares that were self-managed were not considered in the analysis. For other general side-effects of flu vaccine, that can be experienced by anyone regardless of whether they have an inflammatory condition or not please visit

<https://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/flu-vaccine>

### **Does the flu vaccine work in people with inflammatory conditions?**

The study found that people with inflammatory rheumatic conditions who had the flu vaccine were about half as likely to be admitted to hospital due pneumonia, were about half as likely to die due to pneumonia and were about half as likely to die from all other causes of death.

### **When should I have the Influenza vaccine?**

Typically, the flu vaccine is available from September onwards and it would be ideal to get vaccinated early in autumn to protect you from flu before the flu virus circulates in the community.

How often should I get vaccinated?

As the flu virus changes each year, it is recommended to get vaccinated annually.

### **Next Steps**

Vaccinations are given in GP surgery and you can get it there or at your local pharmacy. Talk to your GP or hospital team and they can answer your question and concerns.

**Further information about the influenza vaccine can be found at:**

<https://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/flu-vaccine>

**This summary sheet includes information from research funded by the National Institute of Health Research and Versus Arthritis.**

**Further information about the research studies can be found at: website under development.**

## **Inflammatory Conditions and Vaccination against Pneumonia**

Vaccination is an important step in protecting your health, especially if you have inflammatory conditions and are taking medication that can suppress your immune system (a part of the body that fights off infection). People with inflammatory conditions are at an increased risk of getting pneumonia. Pneumonia is a serious form of chest infection that can make people seriously unwell and require treatment in a hospital. Pneumococcal pneumonia is the most common form of pneumonia.

### **Why Are vaccines important for people with inflammatory conditions?**

Inflammatory conditions and medications such as steroids, methotrexate, and biologics that are used to treat them increase the risk of getting unwell with pneumonia. This happens because these medicines weaken the body's ability to fight infection.

The pneumonia vaccination has long been recommended for people with inflammatory conditions taking medications that suppress the immune system, however, many people in the UK don't take it. In people with inflammatory conditions pneumococcal vaccine was given to:

- approximately 3 in 10 people aged 18 up to 44 years,
- approximately 5 in 10 people aged between 45 and 65 years, and
- approximately 8 in 10 people aged over 65 years had taken it.

### **Vaccination against pneumonia**

The Pneumococcal vaccine (also called pneumonia jab) can boost your defences and protect against the commonest type of pneumonia

### **Am I eligible?**

If you are taking medications that suppress the immune system, you are eligible for receiving the pneumococcal vaccination. Talk to your GP or hospital specialist about it, if you have not already had this jab.

### **I am concerned that the Pneumococcal vaccine can cause my inflammatory condition to flare-up.**

Research at the University of Nottingham explored the association between Pneumococcal vaccination and inflammatory condition flare. The study included people with rheumatoid arthritis, inflammatory bowel disease, axial spondylarthritis and lupus. No relationship was found between Pneumococcal vaccination and people seeking NHS help for managing a flare-up of their condition. This was found regardless of age, in both men and women and in each of the conditions included in the study. A limitation of the research is that it only looked at people seeking NHS help for managing flare, minor flares that were self-managed were not considered in the analysis. For other general side-effects of pneumonia vaccine, that can be experienced by anyone regardless of whether they have an inflammatory condition or not please visit <https://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/pneumococcal-vaccine>

### **Does the Pneumonia vaccine work in people with inflammatory conditions?**

Research at the University also explored how effective the Pneumonia vaccine is in preventing pneumonia and its complications in people with rheumatoid arthritis, inflammatory bowel disease, axial spondylarthritis and lupus.

The study found for people who had the Pneumococcal vaccination the odds of being admitted to hospital for pneumonia were reduced by a third and the odds of death because of pneumonia were reduced by just under a half. The effect was the same across different age groups, for both men and women and for people who had other long term health conditions.

**When should I have the Pneumococcal vaccine**

If possible before you commence immunosuppressing drugs or as soon as possible if you have not already had it.

**How many doses of the Pneumococcal vaccine will I need**

Almost all people only require one dose of the pneumococcal vaccine to provide protection.

**Next Steps**

Vaccinations are undertaken in GP surgery and you can get it there. Talk to your GP or hospital team and they can answer your question and concerns.

**Further information about the Pneumococcal vaccine can be found here:**

<https://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/pneumococcal-vaccine>

**Further information about the research be found here: website in development**

## **Inflammatory Conditions and Vaccination against Covid-19**

Vaccination is an important step in protecting your health, especially if you have inflammatory conditions and are taking medication that can suppress your immune system (a part of the body that fights off infection). People with inflammatory conditions are at an increased risk of serious illness needing treatment in hospital because of Covid-19.

### **Why Are vaccines important for people with inflammatory conditions?**

Inflammatory conditions and medications such as steroids, methotrexate, and biologics that are used to treat them increase the risk of getting unwell with Covid-19. This happens because these medicines weaken the body's ability to fight infection.

The Covid-19 vaccine, often called the Covid vaccine is recommended for people with inflammatory conditions who are taking such medications. However, research found that only just over half of people with inflammatory conditions took up the Covid-19 vaccination.

### **Vaccination against Covid-19**

The Covid-19 vaccine can boost your defences and protect against serious illness that may result because of Covid-19 infection.

### **Am I eligible?**

If you are taking medications that turn down the immune system, you may be eligible for receiving the Covid-19 vaccine. Talk to your hospital team or GP about it if you haven't had it.

### **I am concerned that the Covid-19 vaccine can cause my inflammatory condition to flare-up.**

Researchers at The University of Nottingham explored the association between the Covid-19 vaccination and people with inflammatory conditions that included rheumatoid arthritis, polymyalgia rheumatica, giant cell arthritis, spondyloarthritis, small vessel vasculitis, eczema, psoriasis and inflammatory bowel disease. The study found no relationship between vaccination against Covid-19 and people seeking NHS help for managing a flare-up in each of these conditions. This was the same across all age groups, for both men and women and regardless of the Covid-19 vaccine technology used. A limitation of the research is that it only looked at people seeking NHS help for managing flare, minor flares that were self-managed would not show in the findings. For other general side-effects of flu vaccine, that can be experienced by anyone regardless of whether they have an inflammatory condition or not please visit <https://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/covid-19-vaccine>

### **When should I have the Covid-19 vaccine?**

Government guidelines indicate how often to be vaccinated against Covid-19 to maintain protection in different risk-groups. It is recommended to adhere to these. It would be preferable to get the vaccine sooner rather than later to protect you better from getting seriously unwell with Covid-19 as it circulates in the community.

### **Next Steps**

Vaccinations are undertaken in GP surgery and you can get it there or at your local pharmacy. Talk to your GP or hospital team and they can answer your question and concerns.

### **Further information about the influenza vaccine can be found at:**

<https://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/covid-19-vaccine>

**Further information about the research studies can be found at: website under development.**