

Parents urged to make sure children get flu vaccine

All parents and guardians of eligible children are urged to take up the offer of free flu vaccination to help prevent the spread of the virus. The vaccine is being offered to pre-school and primary school children.

Getting the vaccine

The [flu virus](#) spreads through the air. Because young children don't always cover their noses or mouths when coughing or sneezing, the virus can spread very quickly among them.

The free [flu vaccine for children](#) provides them with the best defence against the illness and helps protect their wider family and friends.

Pre-school children in Northern Ireland aged two years and over are eligible to get the vaccine through their GP.

Children in primaries one to seven will be offered the vaccine in school.

In addition, people over 65, 'at risk' children and adults, and pregnant women, can get the vaccine at their doctor's surgery.

Some GPs may not invite all of their registered patients who are eligible for vaccination directly.

If you, or someone in your care, is eligible to be vaccinated but does not get an invitation, contact [your GP](#) to find out more about their flu vaccination clinics.

The vaccine changes each year to cover the strains which are likely to be circulating over the course of the flu season, so it's important to get immunised each year.

As it takes approximately two weeks following vaccination to develop maximum protection against [flu](#), it's important to get vaccinated. If you wait until flu starts circulating, it may be too late for the vaccine to protect you, so get the flu vaccine and stay well this winter.

Nasal spray

Most children will get the vaccine through a quick and painless nasal spray. The nasal vaccine has been shown to provide even greater protection for children than the flu injection.

There are a few children who cannot get the nasal spray and they will be offered the injection instead.

You can find out more on the [flu vaccine for children](#) page.

More useful links

[Recognising the signs and symptoms of sepsis](#)

Date published: 13 September 2018

It's important to recognise the signs and symptoms of sepsis. Also referred to as blood poisoning or septicaemia, it can be a life-threatening condition. Get medical help immediately if you think you've noticed the early signs of sepsis.

Sepsis and septic shock

You should keep sepsis in mind when someone:

- becomes very unwell
- acts differently than they have previously when they had an infection
- has a fast heartbeat
- has fast breathing or difficulty breathing

The early symptoms of sepsis include:

- a high temperature (fever) or, due to changes in circulation, a low body temperature instead
- chills and shivering

In some cases, and often very quickly, severe sepsis or [septic shock](#) can develop. Symptoms include:

- feeling dizzy or faint
- confusion or disorientation
- slurred speech
- severe muscle pain
- severe breathlessness
- not urinating for a day
- cold, clammy and pale or mottled skin, or grey (ashen) appearance

You can find more information at the following link:

Severe sepsis and septic shock are medical emergencies. If you think you or someone you know has one of these conditions, call 999 and ask for an ambulance.

More useful links

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[European Heritage Open Days weekend brings history to life](#)

Planning what to do this weekend (Saturday 8 and Sunday 9 September)? Why not get involved in European Heritage Open Days? With free entry and some properties opening to the public this weekend only, you might get the chance to explore somewhere you otherwise wouldn't get the chance to see.

Something for everyone

With more than 360 historic buildings and places of interest opening their doors, including historic cottages, mills, private houses, and castles, there really is something for everyone.

Bun na Margáí Friary, Ballycastle

Experience the golden stones and stories of Bun na Margáí Friary, Ballycastle through expert guided tours and lectures.

Built by Rory MacQuillan in 1500, the rival MacDonnell clan claimed the Friary in 1588 and the coffin of Sorley Boy MacDonnell lies here.

See and hear the stories of the Friary through Gaelic clan warfare and World War, or discover its links with the Spanish Armada.

Marladoo House, Co Armagh

A private home, this charming two-storey Georgian House is 200-years-old. Situated beside Marladoo Lake, where Hugh O'Neill kept his wife and valuables safe on a crannog during the nine years' war.

Knockbracken Healthcare Park

A guided tour of selected buildings of the former Purdysburn Villa Colony, a former 'asylum' for mentally ill patients built between 1902 and 1913.

Purdysburn was laid out as a suburban-style settlement in an innovative design that was based on German colony asylums of the late 19th century.

The tour will consider how the buildings were built to maximise patient health.

Cockle Row Cottages, Groomsport

Cockle Row Cottages are restored fishermen's cottages dating back to the 1600s, beside the harbour in the picturesque village of Groomsport. They are home to a living history exhibition.

There will be free entertainment, including a magic show, sand art workshop, and a demonstration of traditional skills over the weekend.

Fermanagh historic graveyards

Explore by bus the stories hidden within two historic graveyards.

This trip visits the old graveyard on Cleenish Island, Upper Lough Erne, which has links to the heritage of St Columbanus.

It also will allow you to discover the history of Aghalurcher Church and graveyard (see pic above), and enjoy the performances of the history of these graveyards.

Tower Museum

Discover the Story of Derry exhibition, covering the history of the city from 5,000 BC to modern day.

Why not take part in Paper Quilting Workshop?

See behind the scenes of the museum's vast collection of items not currently on display and see how objects and archives are stored and cared for on this short family-friendly bus trip.

Woodrow Wilson Ancestral Homestead, Co Tyrone

Explore the rich Ulster-American connections and learn how the fate of Woodrow Wilson, 28th President of the United States, was to lie in the hands of local man James Wilson.

Artefacts on display include a wide selection of household furnishings, kitchen utensils, and farm implements.

Enjoy storytelling, craft demonstrations and short talks.

European Heritage Open Days events

To find a full list of European Heritage Open Days building openings and events you can either [use the map viewer](#) or [download a brochure for more information](#).

You can also pick up a brochure from your local tourist information centre, council office, or from museums and libraries.

More useful links

[Sharing theme of European Heritage Open Days weekend](#)

During European Heritage Open Days (EHOD) weekend (8 and 9 September) more than 360 properties across Northern Ireland will be opening to the public free of charge. This year, the theme is 'The Art of Sharing', especially sharing heritage stories through buildings and their connections to locations and people.

Selection of events

Many EHOD events have been organised with a view to looking at new ways of sharing stories, and many of them are not usually open to the public. Below are just a small selection of events on the sharing theme.

Greenmount Campus, CAFRE, Antrim

Explore the 200-year-old walled garden and other heritage garden features and find out how they have been and still are used.

Horticulture skills past and present will be shared and there are guided tours available of the heritage and modern gardens.

Armagh Observatory and Planetarium

Join the celebrations for the Planetarium's 50th year and find out about the history and people behind this attraction.

Enjoy a tour of the Planetarium building and grounds, and explore the heritage of this unique organisation involved in groundbreaking research and that has been exploring the cosmos since 1790.

Historic Great Light Tour, Titanic Walkway, Belfast

Join the interactive tour of the Great Light, which is one of the largest lighthouse optics of its kind ever built.

Your guide will bring to life the story of lighthouses, changes in technology, memories of the light-keepers, and role in the maritime and industrial history of Belfast and beyond.

Annalong Cornmill

Situated by pretty Annalong Harbour, near the foothills of the Mourne Mountains, this once-busy cornmill was in operation from the early 1800s to the 1960s.

There are free guided tours, and you can meet the miller and watch the water wheel in action to experience life in the Mournes in the past.

Headhunters Railway Museum, Enniskillen

Why not visit the world's only railway museum in a working barber shop? You will find one of the largest collections of Irish railway memorabilia on display.

Starting at the reconstructed booking office, where the ticket collector invites you to step on board, your journey recreates railway travel through Fermanagh and the border counties until the closure of the lines in 1957.

Heritage tour of Moneymore

Join Moneymore Heritage Trust for a tour to discover the hidden beauty of Moneymore.

You will make your way around the village to hear the heritage behind the limestone with visits to unique buildings, including the Common Barn, Corn Stores, Courthouse and Assembly Rooms.

Buildings are opened with the kindness of the community – a true example of the art of sharing.

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More useful links

Reopening of Department for Communities offices in Castle Court on Thursday 30 August

Date published: 29 August 2018

Following safety checks due to the fire at Primark, normal service will resume at the Department for Communities (DfC) offices in Castle Court and Royal Avenue Social Security Office on Thursday 30 August.

Offices open

The offices will be open as normal for staff access.

Service to customers will start from 9.00 am for anyone visiting the Royal Avenue Social Security Office or contacting DfC about:

- Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
- Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
- Carers Allowance
- Attendance Allowance
- Welfare Supplementary Payments

Universal Credit

Universal Credit remains unaffected.

Wednesday 29 August

If you need to visit Royal Avenue Social Security office on Wednesday 29 August you can instead use the North Belfast office in the Design Centre, 39 Corporation Street, Belfast.

If you need help, you can also [contact your local Job and Benefits Offices, Jobcentres and Social Security Offices.](#)

The Department for Communities thanks all its customers for their understanding and apologises for any inconvenience.

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