

School aged immunisation service: Information and tips to help if you are scared of needles

The school aged immunisation team understands that having a vaccination is not easy for everyone. Lots of people can get anxious before having an injection, for lots of reasons.

They may:

- worry it will hurt
- be reminded of a previous bad experience
- worry about a loss of control
- fear they might faint
- have a phobia of needles
- or feel uncomfortable with unfamiliar people or change to routine.

Did you know that 1 in 10 people can struggle with nervousness around having a vaccine?

It really is okay to feel nervous, anxious, worried or scared – or even fine or excited. After all, having a vaccination is not a normal part of your school day!

What's important to remember is that our experienced and friendly team see thousands of young people every year for their immunisations. We are very good at making vaccinations as easy as possible for you. We will do everything we can to support you.

Please read through this document for our top tips on what could help you to prepare and have your vaccination.



Our commonly asked questions

Will it hurt?

We all feel pain differently, but the vaccination will not be unbearably painful. If you keep your arm still and relaxed you will only feel a small scratch.

How big is the needle?

The needle is very small and thin. It is the same sized needle that is used when vaccinating very small babies.

How long does it take?

The actual vaccination is very quick. It will be over in less than 10 seconds. Some people do not even realise they've had the vaccine!

What will happen on the day?

Unless you request otherwise, you will be taken into a room with your class. This will be where the vaccination takes place. In the room will be some tables with a health professional sat at each one. You will be called over to the table to have the vaccination. The immunisation nurse will ask you some questions to find out who you are and talk you through what will happen. They are all really nice and will do what they can to make you feel comfortable. They will then give you the vaccine. While they give the vaccination they might try to distract you by talking to you about your favourite topic.

After the vaccine, you will be given some advice about what to do if you experience any side effects. Side effects are usually mild and may include things like a sore arm or a mild headache. You can then go back to your class.

How can I prepare?

You can try practicing relaxation breathing. This can help to slow down your heart rate and reduce feelings of anxiety. To do this, breath in through your nose while counting to four, and then slowly out through your mouth. You can place your hand on your tummy while you do this. Practice this the week before you have the vaccine.

If you are worried you may faint, remember that you can ask to be seen separately – or you can ask to be given the vaccine lying down, if this is better for you.

If you have any questions it is okay to ask the service before the session date. Parents or carers can contact the service on **0300 3000 007**.

Top tips that can help to make the session easier for you

- Wear a short-sleeved top, shirt or blouse if possible, as this will make it easier for you to have the vaccine.
- Make sure you eat a healthy breakfast and have a drink before school.
- Let school staff know how you feel so that you can be seen at the beginning of the session. Sometimes having to wait can make the whole event seem worse.
- Think of things that help you to relax. This could be doing your breathing exercises, counting to 100 backwards or holding a stress ball (the nurses will have these on their tables). The nurses will also let you listen to music or watch a video on your phone or tablet if this will help you.
- Request to have a familiar adult or friend with you while you have the vaccine.
- Bring a drink and snack with you to school to have after the vaccination.
- Remember the procedure is very quick and only takes a few seconds. The vaccine is there to protect you, not to hurt you.

I get a bit scared of needles. The nurse was really kind and friendly. She let me go first, so I didn't have to wait.

She let me listen to my music which really helped to distract me. It was all over really quickly and it didn't even really hurt!

