

Flu and covid-19 vaccination focus

The NHS is gearing up to deliver the safe and effective annual flu vaccination programme from autumn as it's the best protection against flu and its complications.

Flu and coronavirus can make some people seriously ill and it's more important than ever to get the flu vaccine if you're eligible to, particularly as it is expected that this will be the first winter when COVID-19 will co-circulate alongside the seasonal influenza virus.

The flu vaccine is free for older people, pregnant women, and those with certain underlying medical conditions.

The expanded influenza vaccination programme that we had last year, will continue this year (2021 to 2022). This means that the offer for 50 to 64 year olds will continue to protect this age group.

In addition, this year's programme has been extended to 4 additional cohorts in secondary school so that all those from years 7 to year 11 will be offered the vaccination.

Therefore, those eligible for the free flu vaccination on the NHS this year (2021 to 2022) are:

- all children aged 2 to 15 (but not 16 years or older) on 31 August 2021
- those aged 6 months to under 50 years in clinical risk groups
- pregnant women
- those aged 50 years and over
- those in long-stay residential care homes
- carers
- close contacts of immunocompromised individuals
- frontline health and social care staff employed by:
 - a registered residential care or nursing home
 - registered domiciliary care provider
 - a voluntary managed hospice provider
 - Direct Payment (personal budgets) and/or Personal Health Budgets, such as Personal Assistants.

Children aged 2 and 3 will continue to be offered the quick and easy nasal spray through their GP and all school aged children will be offered it in school unless they have an underlying health condition. An alternative flu vaccine, in the form of an injection, will again be available this year for children whose parents decline the flu nasal spray due to its porcine gelatine content.

The [JCVI's interim advice](#) is that any potential COVID-19 booster programme should be offered in two stages from September, starting with those most at risk from serious disease. This includes people aged over 70, clinically extremely vulnerable adults and those who are immunosuppressed.

The NHS is expecting a decision very soon as to whether the flu vaccination and COVID-19 booster can be given together, at the same time.

Flu is very infectious and easily spread to other people from coughs and sneezes, which can live on hands and surfaces for 24 hours. To reduce the risk of spreading flu wash your hands often with warm water and soap, use tissues to trap germs when you cough or sneeze and bin used tissues as quickly as possible.

Please keep a look out on your GP practice website for more information or visit the [NHS website](#).

Communication Objectives

The plan will support national/regional flu campaign messages and local requirements by doing the following:

- Highlight those who are eligible for both the flu and covid vaccines this year – The expansion of this year's flu programme means that many more people will be eligible to receive the free vaccine for the first time but may not realise this. This plan will help to ensure that all those who are eligible, and those who care for them, know how important it is to have it, and to support influential and trusted healthcare professionals with the resources to encourage uptake, in the aim of achieving the national uptake ambitions
- Target hard to reach communities/Help raise performance in the lowest performing areas/Places- Particular communications focus will be paid to those where the uptake of the flu vaccination was below the expected national average last year; those living in the most deprived areas; as well as those from BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) communities given the increased risk they face from COVID-19. The latter will require high quality, dedicated and culturally competent engagement with local communities, employers and faith groups. This work will be informed by vaccination rates for both flu and covid vaccinations
- Help manage public expectations about (a) co-administration – you may be able to get both vaccines at the same time (b) eligibility for covid-19 vaccination
- Support Primary Care and providers – As the national, public facing publicity material is not expected to be released until end of September/start of October, provide communications support to Primary Care as many practices are due to start vaccinating for flu from mid-September

- Ensure people know how to access flu and covid-19 vaccination clinics: This plan will ensure that consistent messages are given that primary care services are open and safe to offer the flu vaccination, albeit there will be changes made to localised service delivery.
- Encourage staff to get vaccinated across Health and Social Care – working with partners to ensure consistency of message and easy access to information in different formats and languages
- Working in partnership – To support the uptake targets within each cohort and new cohorts by ensuring targeted public engagement, marketing and communications and implementation of the ‘Boost your immunity this winter’ campaign

Delivering the plan:

The week by week focus described in the main winter communications plan will contain flu and covid vaccination messages as is above with flex built in, to ensure it is responsive and data driven.

With increased targets for vaccinations, we will ensure that every effort is made to promote and educate all on how we will safely deliver flu clinics.

We will promote advice locally, encouraging the public (especially those most at risk of complications from flu) to have a flu vaccination.

Whilst a joint-up, collaborative communications approach is being taken this year, Place comms leads will continue to work with primary care teams to help deliver specific, targeted local communications.

A proactive media handling approach will be taken in addition to being responsive to reactive opportunities, e.g. media enquiries.

The plan has been produced on the understanding that no (or at best limited) additional funding will be available and, therefore, it focuses on traditional and digital media solutions which either incur no or minimal cost. If more substantial funding is available, the plan can be adapted.

We will support national PR and marketing activity which will incorporate a series of activations through the winter season, targeted at individual groups eligible for the free vaccine.

Eligibility

Those eligible for the free flu vaccination on the NHS this year (2021 to 2022) are:

- all children aged 2 to 15 (but not 16 years or older) on 31 August 2021
- those aged 6 months to under 50 years in clinical risk groups
- pregnant women
- those aged 50 years and over
- those in long-stay residential care homes
- carers

- close contacts of immunocompromised individuals
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Key messages (to be adapted to include covid vaccination messages) – public

Messaging will primarily focus on protection, safety and responsibility.

- “Boost your immunity this winter”
- It’s more important than ever to get your free flu vaccination this year. Don’t delay, book today!
- This winter don’t forget to book your flu vaccination with your GP or pharmacy. They are open and safe.
- We are working hard to ensure that you get your flu vaccine in the right place at the right time and in the safest way possible
- Protect yourself and others this winter by getting your flu vaccine. The number of people eligible to receive the free flu jab has increased this year.
- As Covid-19 is likely to be co-circulating with flu this winter, protecting those at high risk from flu, who are also those most vulnerable to hospitalisation as a result of Covid-19, is vitally important
- Find out if you’re eligible for this year’s flu vaccination by visiting (insert email address)
- Flu is serious and is different to the common cold. Symptoms include a high temperature, body aches and fatigue.
- The flu virus spreads from person to person. Even amongst those not showing symptoms
- Flu kills an average of 11,000 people every year and hospitalises thousands more.
- If you think you have flu, stay at home and rest until you feel better. Call NHS 111 if you have an underlying health condition or feel really unwell
- Aside from having your flu vaccine, the best way to prevent the spread of flu is to practice good hand hygiene. Catch coughs and sneezes in a tissue, throw the tissue away and wash your hands

Key messages – staff

To be a reflection of the national campaign and linked to PeopleLikeMe locally

COMMUNICATION METHODS

Social media - We will use social media channels across the Frimley Collaborative - Twitter, Facebook - to share press releases and raise awareness of any local initiatives to improve vaccination uptake in target groups. This includes sharing with partners for them to re-share in turn.

Local media/Specialist media (Print and Broadcast) - We will share information with our local media in all five Places as part of our efforts to target eligible groups. As in previous years, we will explore opportunities to work with specialist press too such as Primary Times magazine; Asian Star radio station in Slough and Gurkha radio in Rushmoor. We will endeavour to facilitate any media interview requests where possible and use case studies to engage local media

On-line toolkit for health care professionals – Information will be shared via the GP bulletin and explore need for a GP toolkit

Written copy - To assist with the general flow of messaging, press releases and web copy will be compiled locally. These will be complementary or supplemental to any other messaging materials held or used locally by NHS England, or other partners involved in supporting the flu campaign. All news releases or media opportunities to be signed off by NHSE regional team.

Websites- Flu will be built into the dedicated section on the Frimley Health and Care website which currently holds Covid-19 vaccination information. People looking for information on the Frimley CCG website, will be signposted to the ICS website. We will support local practices with generic web copy as well as encourage partners to share copy via their websites

Community publications/platforms - Community newsletters, websites and social media accounts all provide a great link in to local people

Community champions/patient groups – we will continue to engage with and present feedback to community champions/ambassadors in all areas, with the objective of them re-sharing information into their groups.

Appendix 1: 2020/21 flu uptake stats

Eligible groups	2020/21 ambition	National uptake	SE uptake	BOB	HIOW	Frimley	Sussex	Surrey	Kent & Medway
Aged 65 years and over	At least 75%	81%	81.80%	82.80%	84.10%	82.10%	81.80%	80.20%	79.50%
Under 65 clinical at-risk group	At least 75%	52%	56.50%	57.40%	59.90%	57.40%	54.50%	56%	54.10%
Pregnant women	At least 75%	44%	47.50%	47.70%	51.50%	45.30%	49.50%	47.90%	43.20%
Aged 50 to 64 years	N/A	34%	36.60%	38%	40%	35.70%	35.90%	35.20%	33.70%
Children aged 2 and 3 years old*	At least 75%	58%*	64.80%	65.20%	68%	64.20%	65.80%	66.20%	60%

* based on the higher 3 year old uptake

Appendix 2: Flu social media assets



Appendix 3: Vaccination and pregnancy

Research shows pregnant women are more likely to become seriously ill from COVID-19 and 98% of those in hospital due to COVID-19 are unvaccinated – as of published data current at mid-July, no pregnant woman who has had two doses of the vaccine has been hospitalised from COVID-19 in the UK. Pregnant women are also more likely to have severe COVID-19 infection if they are overweight or obese. The Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (RCOG) and the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) recommend vaccination as one of the best defences against severe infection. The JCVI recommends Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccines as the preferred vaccines for pregnant women coming for their first dose.

In spite of this, vaccine hesitancy has been high among pregnant women and many have still not got their vaccine. A [letter](#) published on 30 July urges healthcare professionals to do all they can to raise awareness of the vaccine's benefits among pregnant women, reassure them about any concerns and encourage them to come forward, as well as making every contact count in maternity and primary care services. Advice for all women of childbearing age, pregnant or breastfeeding is [here](#).

If you are 40 or over, and are booking your COVID-19 vaccination on [NBS](#) you'll be asked if you are pregnant. This is to make sure people who are pregnant are only shown appointments for Pfizer or Moderna vaccines.



COVID-19 & flu vaccination during pregnancy