



Clinical Bulletin 1 – Intro to Flu Season 2018/19

24/08/2018

For the attention of GPs, all practice staff, pharmacists and directors of public health in North Cumbria and the North East

Thank you for all of your work last winter, which saw more people in the North East and North Cumbria protected against flu than ever before. Preparation for the 2018/19 Influenza season is well underway and as in previous years, we would like to highlight the importance of the seasonal flu vaccination programme in protecting those most at risk in the community. This monthly bulletin will highlight the most relevant information regarding this year's programme for healthcare professionals.

Headlines from Last Season

- The majority of circulating Influenza A (H3N2) and B-Yamagata strains were reported to be similar to the Northern Hemisphere trivalent and quadrivalent vaccine strains.
- Similarly to previous A (H3N2) dominated seasons, the impact was primarily observed in older adults.
- Sustained media coverage created some concerns and uncertainty about flu vaccination.
- There were a higher number of outbreaks reported than in the previous two seasons, the majority of which occurred in care homes.
- The peak in weekly GP consultation rates was higher than that seen in the previous several seasons.
- A very high impact was observed in secondary care in terms of laboratory confirmed admissions, particularly amongst older adults.
- Levels of excess all-cause mortality were elevated but lower than in the 2014/15 season when influenza A (H3N2) also dominated.

Key Policies and Resources

National guidance, Q&A's and information slide sets can be found in the [Annual Flu Programme Content](#)

The [Influenza Chapter \(chapter 19\)](#) in 'Immunisation against infectious diseases' (The Green Book)

'[Stay Well This Winter](#)' promotional material can be downloaded from the [PHE Campaign Resource Centre](#).

Healthcare practitioners training material: [Flu immunisation e-Learning for healthcare workers](#)

[National Institute for Health and Care Excellence \(NICE\) guidelines](#) on increasing flu vaccine uptake

Eligibility **Reminder: GPs are responsible for proactively calling ALL patients eligible for vaccination in primary care, with recall also required for clinical risk groups and children aged 2-3**

- All children aged two to nine (but not ten years or older) on 31st August 2018
- All primary-school aged children in former primary school pilot areas
- Those aged six months to 65 years in clinical risk groups
- Pregnant women
- Those aged 65 years and over
- Those in long-stay residential care homes
- Health and social care staff including hospice workers

The two groups which require additional targeted effort are **clinical risk groups** and **pre-school children**. Uptake rates in clinical risk groups remain low and individuals in these groups are at particular risk of morbidity and mortality. Rates are similarly low in pre-school children. Children under 5 years of age have the highest rate of hospital admissions for flu of all age groups and improving uptake in young children will provide individual protection as well as helping to protect the wider community.

Vaccines

The JCVI recommends the following vaccinations for the various eligible groups:

- **Quadrivalent vaccine (QIV)** for those 6 – 23 months in clinical risk groups, those 18 – 64 years in clinical risk groups, pregnant women, carers and household contacts of immunocompromised individuals;
- **Quadrivalent live attenuated influenza vaccination (LAIV, trade name Fluenz Tetra)** for the children's programme;
- **Adjuvanted trivalent vaccine (aTIV; trade name Flud@)** will be used for all 65s and over.

The delivery of Flud@ is being staged this year such that administration of the vaccine to the most vulnerable groups must be prioritised in line with the [Flu Vaccination Programme Delivery Guidance 2018-19](#). This document also sets out the planned staged delivery schedule which should be taken into account when planning vaccination sessions for those aged 65 and over.



Which services are offering vaccination this year?

Each year there are a wider range of services providing flu vaccination, improving access for patients. This is popular with the public and contributes to improved flu vaccination uptake rates.

- **GP practices** have the responsibility to contact all patients eligible for vaccination in primary care and offer a range of appointment times so the eligible practice population can access immunisation at the practice, if they choose to do so. They further have the responsibility to recall those in clinical risk groups and those aged 2-3.
- **Pharmacies** offer flu vaccination to those aged 18 years and over and must notify practices of vaccinations administered to their patients within 2 working days.
- **School-based providers** offer vaccination to all children in reception to year 5. In addition, all children in years 0-6 years will be offered the vaccine in schools in Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland. **GP practices should ensure they still contact children in clinical risk groups for vaccination as this group remains eligible for vaccination at GPs.**
- **Employers** - Employers of health and social care staff (including hospice workers) should provide flu vaccination to these staff as an occupational health responsibility. These staff may also access vaccination at [general practices](#) or [pharmacies](#) which have signed up to deliver this service.

Additionally, discussions have been held with **midwifery services** across the region with a view to securing another means of access to flu vaccine for pregnant women at antenatal contacts.

Workforce Vaccination

Your workforce is at an increased risk of both spreading Influenza to vulnerable individuals and being infected by flu themselves due to the frontline nature of their work. The best way to directly protect your workforce, and indirectly protect those in the community they come into contact with, is to offer them vaccination. Please support all staff to be vaccinated against Influenza. Promotional material can be downloaded from the [PHE Campaign Resource Centre](#). Flu vaccine uptake data for healthcare workers should be submitted via [Immform](#).

Immform and Data Management

Guidance on the seasonal flu uptake data collection as well as the latest coverage data is available on [this website](#).

Advice Line and Incident Reporting

The NHS England Screening and Immunisation Team (SIT) can be contacted to report incidents and for support in interpretation of national policy and guidelines.

You will receive a response within 2 working days. This service is provided for Healthcare Professionals only. Contact the team by email at england.cane.screeningimms@nhs.net or telephone (Monday- Friday 1-5pm) 0113 825 3017.

Information regarding the Cumbria and North East 'Flu Launch' will be circulated soon!