



Influenza (flu) vaccinations 2020/2021

Memorandum

September 2020

Due to the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic the UK and devolved administrations have changed the eligibility criteria for obtaining a flu vaccination in the 2020/21 season. The purpose of this is to ensure maximum coverage and protect a larger proportion of the population than in previous years, because of the possibility of mixed flu and COVID-19 infections over the forthcoming winter months.

Flu immunisation this winter is being given greater attention than usual because:

- it is possible that simultaneous flu and COVID-19 infection could occur, and cause greater severity of illness than either alone
- it would be important to reduce hospital admissions with flu in a possible 'second wave' of hospitalised COVID-19 patients
- reducing the number of flu cases by immunisation may reduce the difficulty of distinguishing flu and COVID-19 illness in patients.

The following groups are eligible for the flu vaccine this year through the NHS:

- All primary school children
- Children aged 2 to 5 (children aged 2 on 1 September 2020 and not yet in school)
- *Anyone aged 55 and over (Scotland) or 65 and over (England & Wales)*
- *Anyone with a health condition*
- *Those living with people previously shielding*
- Pregnant women
- Healthcare workers
- Unpaid and young carers
- Social care workers who provide direct personal care.

The criteria most likely to apply to offshore personnel are highlighted above. Personnel who meet these criteria should be contacted by the NHS and offered immunisation. They should strongly consider the potential benefits of accepting. Personnel who meet the criteria and have not been contacted are encouraged to seek the advice of their GP surgery.

Some employers may choose to offer flu vaccination programmes/campaigns out-with the NHS, to personnel not meeting the NHS criteria. Again, given the uncertainty around the potential for mixed flu/COVID-19 infections in the forthcoming winter months, personnel are encouraged to consider the potential benefits of accepting an offer of immunisation.



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