

PRESS RELEASE

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Health leaders across Morecambe Bay urge eligible people to get ready for the flu vaccine

If you are eligible for the flu vaccine this year – get ready to get it – that is the advice from health leaders across Morecambe Bay.

Morecambe Bay's flu vaccination programme is a vital part of keeping people in our communities safe this winter; having a flu jab doesn't just protect you; it also protects those around you. Flu spreads from person to person and people can spread the virus even when they don't have symptoms.

This year there is likely to be a change to the way you receive your flu vaccine as health teams have to factor in social distancing and infection prevention measures to keep people safe.

Some surgeries will be offering drive through options, using local community centres or calling people for time specific appointments, rather than the traditional drop-in clinics. Practices are now contacting eligible patients and calling them for their flu vaccine – this could be by letter, text or phone.

If you get your flu jab every year there are three key things we are urging you to do:

1. Look out for the plans from your surgery - they'll be getting in touch to tell you when and where to go for your jab. The arrangements are likely to be different this year, this is to keep you safe.
2. Once you know when and where to go - get prepared – be sure you know where to go, any specific timings and remember your face covering and any letters you have to show.
3. Get the jab - do your bit to protect yourself and others.

Dr Geoff Jolliffe, lead GP at Morecambe Bay CCG added:

“This year it’s even more important than usual to have a flu jab, with the risks that we already face from coronavirus – and so we are asking you to have your flu jab on behalf of everyone else in your community, if you are eligible.”

“Lots of thought and care has been put into planning this year’s vaccination programme by our primary care teams. If you are contacted by your surgery you will be given instructions on the infection prevention measures each practice has put in place to keep everyone safe.

“So for some this might mean a drive through clinic and for others it might mean a specific slot at your practice. However and wherever you get your jab you will be expected to wear a face covering and sanitise your hands thoroughly.

“It’s also crucial that eligible people have their flu vaccine as soon as possible, rather than waiting until flu starts to circulate in the community, so make sure you are ready to act when your practice gets in touch.”

As well as GP practices, local pharmacies, school nursing teams and other health professionals will be delivering the annual vaccination programme.

People at high risk of COVID-19 are also most at risk from flu, which is why it is so important to have your free flu vaccine this year. Every year the annual flu vaccination programme supports those most at risk. It’s not just ‘flu’ – each year lots of people become very ill and many die from the illness. While flu can cause mild illness in most people, some people are more likely to develop potentially serious complications such as bronchitis and pneumonia. The flu vaccine helps protect family, friends and people you care for who may be vulnerable.

Patients in 'at risk' groups who are eligible to receive a free flu jab include:

- Everyone aged 65 years or over
- Women who are pregnant
- Those aged six months to under 65 years in clinical risk groups including patients who suffer from a chronic illness, such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), kidney disease, hepatitis, Parkinsons, HIV and diabetes
- Children aged two or three years old on 31 August 2020
- All primary school-aged children
- Children with a health condition that puts them at a greater risk of flu
- Those in long-stay residential care homes
- Carers
- All frontline health and social care workers

This year it also includes:

- Year 7 secondary school-aged children
- Household members of those who may have been shielding
- Later in the year the age range will extend to those aged 50-64, dependent on vaccine supply

For most children the flu vaccine is a quick and easy nasal spray. Children aged 2 and 3 receive the vaccine through their GP and those at school from Reception to Year 7 will receive it in school. If you have a child who is of the eligible age, make sure you sign the consent form allowing them to have the flu vaccine at school. The nasal spray may also be available for some people with learning disabilities.

Dr Andy Knox, a GP working in Carnforth, explained:

“Having your child vaccinated against flu protects your child, your family and your friends. There is no scary injection needed as it is done with a nasal spray and it is far less hassle than having

the flu. We know that children pass around bugs and viruses really easily – and even with the COVID restrictions in place this year, there will still be opportunities for our children to catch the flu.

“On top of everything else that is going on and the valuable time in school that has already been lost, avoiding further time off is more important than ever - that’s why we’re really keen to make sure as many children as possible have the vaccine this year.”

Cumbria County Council’s Director of Public Health, Colin Cox, said:

“We usually have a good take up of the flu vaccine in Cumbria and we hope to see that again this year. There are also some new groups who are receiving the vaccine for the first time, including members of households where people were shielding and pupils in Year 7 at secondary school.

“Later in the year we’ll also be looking to extend the vaccine to the over 50s, but it is important we concentrate our initial efforts on those who are most clinically vulnerable. Please don’t delay taking up the offer of a free flu vaccine.”

GP practices will contact eligible patients and advise them of how they will be delivering the flu vaccine this year, there will also be information on your practice’s website and social media channels. You can also have your flu vaccination at a local pharmacy.

Notes to editors:

1. For more information on flu visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/flu>
2. For further information, please contact the communications team on by email as indicated above.
3. Bay Health and Care Partners is made up of the following organisations: University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust, Morecambe Bay Clinical Commissioning Group, GP Provider Alliance, Lancashire County Council, Cumbria County Council, Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust (formerly known as Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust), NWAS and North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust (formerly known as Cumbria Partnership NHS Foundation Trust)