

To: General Practitioners
NHS Trusts – Medical Director
NHS Foundation Trusts – Medical Director
PCT Medical Directors
PCT Immunisation Co-ordinators
SHA Immunisation Leads
SHA Flu Leads
Chief Pharmacists/Pharmaceutical Advisers of PCTs
Practice Nurses
All Pharmacists

cc: SHA Directors of Public Health
Consultants in Communicable Disease Control
Accident and Emergency Departments
Regional Directors of Public Health
Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
Royal College of Physicians
Royal College of General Practitioners

Gateway reference number: 16563

13th September 2011

Dear Colleague

SEASONAL FLU IMMUNISATION PROGRAMME 2011/12

Further to the letter from the Chief Medical Officer of 25 May 2011, which provided information about the 2011/12 seasonal flu immunisation programme, I am writing to update you on the current situation concerning supplies of seasonal flu vaccine.

Vaccine production

As part of our ongoing discussions with the UK Vaccine Industry Group (UVIG), we recently met to discuss vaccine production. I am pleased to say that the industry has reported no significant problems with production volumes this year. If you have not yet confirmed your delivery schedule, please contact your supplier(s) for further information. The manufacturers have informed us that there are still stocks of flu vaccine available to order.

Use of vaccines in different age groups

You will be aware that the Summaries of Product Characteristics (SPCs) for Enzira and CSL Biotherapies generic influenza vaccines marketed by Pfizer restrict use of these vaccines to use in adults and children from five years of age only. This is due to an increased risk of febrile convulsions in children under five years of age. The SPCs also indicate that an increased number of reports of fever was also reported in the age group five to less than nine years. Whilst fever can occur following vaccination, clinicians should ensure that advice is given to parents on the management of vaccine-induced fever or consider offering an alternative vaccine licensed for the age group five to less than nine years of age, if available at the time of vaccination.

This advice is also given in a revision to the influenza chapter of the Green Book:
www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_128829.pdf

Seasonal flu leaflet

The Department has produced a leaflet 'Seasonal flu vaccination: who should have it and why' in PDF form; it can be downloaded and printed locally from the DH website at
www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh_129876.pdf

The leaflet can also be downloaded from the NHS Choices website and NHS Comms Link.

The NHS coped well with the pressures it faced last winter and we hope to see vaccine uptake improve this year, particularly in at-risk groups and healthcare workers. I am grateful to you for your efforts in achieving high vaccination coverage in those individuals who will benefit most from protection against influenza.

Yours sincerely



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Director of Immunisation