



Frontline healthcare worker? Had your flu vaccination? No? Why not?

Getting yourself protected against flu is your responsibility, not only to protect yourself and your patients but also your family, friends and colleagues. If you work in a residential or nursing home, or anywhere where you are in close contact with patients, getting flu not only means having to take time off work but you also run the risk of infecting the vulnerable people you are meant to be caring for – so not only will they will be ill, you won't be there to look after them.

The NHS is running a Flu fighter campaign as it has in previous years and at [web link 1](#) communications teams will find a toolkit to help raise the profile of the flu vaccination for healthcare workers (HCWs) within NHS organisations. There are also some interesting case studies at [web link 2](#) which show that there is considerable variation in uptake levels in different trusts around the country.

The contents of the pack show that:

- flu can kill
- anyone can get flu
- older people and those at risk are particularly vulnerable
- the flu vaccination does not cause flu
- the flu vaccine is one of the safest around
- the side effects of the vaccine are usually quite mild
- you need the vaccine every year
- pregnant women can get vaccinated at any stage of their pregnancy.

And, if you're still not convinced, see the scientific papers at [web link 3](#) and [web link 4](#).

The first of these shows that, compared with adults working in non-healthcare settings, HCWs are at significantly higher risk of getting influenza and those that get vaccinated reduce their risk of infection by nearly two-thirds. It also indicates that HCWs are more likely to get flu but not show any symptoms themselves – so they are hidden spreaders with potentially serious consequences for their patients.

The second study shows that patients who get flu whilst in hospital are more than twice as likely to get admitted to intensive care units (ICUs) – and stay there twice as long - or die from flu, compared with those who got flu in their communities.

Who is responsible for vaccinating healthcare workers?

If you are a healthcare worker directly involved with patient care it is your employer who should offer you the flu vaccination free of charge. Employers usually arrange this through their occupational health department.

Every year, we receive a number of queries from health and social care workers who go to their GP to ask for the vaccination and are then disappointed to find that they are not eligible. It is not the responsibility of general practices to provide flu vaccination for health and social care workers. This is because their most important role is to ensure that the large numbers of the public who are most at risk from flu receive their vaccinations as quickly and efficiently as possible.

So the message is clear, make an appointment with your occupational health department now to get your flu vaccination to protect yourself and those around you before it is too late.

Why do some NHS trusts have a higher flu vaccination uptake rate than others?

Last year, the overall flu vaccine uptake rate in healthcare workers was 45.6% although between individual trusts uptake ranged from 8% to 85% - a huge disparity.

To maximise vaccine coverage, research suggests that a multi-faceted approach is the most effective, within the context of a comprehensive infection control programme that is designed to protect patients and staff ([see web link 5](#)).

This should include:

- easy access to on-site provision of flu vaccination sessions during staff working hours with protected time
- senior clinical flu vaccination champions
- clinicians vaccinating colleagues
- education and training
- visible communications campaign
- dispelling common misconceptions
- visible board and staff engagement with the local campaign

For further information about best practice strategies, contact the Flu fighter team at NHS Employers on 0844 334 52

Not sure if you're a frontline healthcare worker?

It's understandable that some healthcare workers aren't sure if they should consider themselves as frontline or not because there's no clear definition of how close one's contact with patients has to be to qualify. As individual trusts make this decision on the basis of a local risk assessment, you should contact your employer for clarification about whether you qualify or not. There's also a useful listing in Annex A of the Seasonal influenza frontline healthcare workers vaccine uptake survey – user guide at [web link 18](#).

So how are we doing on flu vaccine uptake overall?

The early indications are that uptake is running at similar levels to last year:

- those 65 and over around 67%
- under 65 and at risk around 44%
- pregnant women around 34%

Whilst encouraging, this leaves over 50% of those at risk under 65 and 60% of pregnant women and their babies still vulnerable to flu.

This is the first year of the new target groups of two- and three-year-olds and uptake is over 30% which is encouraging given the extra workload this has generated for primary care.

However, in order to have a significant impact on transmission within the community we need to increase the coverage further.

It's interesting to note that a small number of GP surgeries have yet to order any Fluenz vaccine. For some, this is because they have opted out of offering childhood immunisations, but for the others NHS England will be in contact to make sure they have not overlooked the flu vaccination programme for healthy two and three year olds.

Are you one of these? Is this because you are vaccinating those most at risk before doing healthy children?

Or have you decided not to do these cohorts at all because you don't have the capacity or your local community pharmacy is doing them? Or are there other reasons? We'd be interested to know. Please e-mail vaccine.update@phe.gov.uk

In the meantime, please continue vaccinating as many adults and children as possible over the coming weeks in order to have the greatest impact this season on flu related illnesses, hospital admissions and deaths.

News just in

Early provisional figures show that flu vaccine uptake in healthcare workers is up on this time last year but significant numbers remain unprotected (see [web link 21](#) where you can also see the uptake among GP patients). As the flu season draws ever nearer, it becomes increasingly important that all HCWs are vaccinated as soon as possible.

Immunisation news

Clarifying the gelatin in flu vaccines issue

Since the introduction of the nasal flu vaccine for children, there have been several stories in the media regarding the gelatin content in the vaccine that some religious and other groups find unacceptable.

The nasal flu vaccine does contain hydrolysed gelatin derived from pork as one of its additives. Gelatin is commonly used in a range of pharmaceutical products, including many capsules and some vaccines. The gelatin used in Fluenz is a highly purified product used to stabilise live viral vaccines.

Can inactivated flu vaccine be offered as an alternative?

The view of Public Health England and the Department of Health is that, for universal vaccination of healthy individuals, there is no suitable alternative to Fluenz. The principle of the programme is to interrupt transmission of influenza and therefore indirectly protect the whole population – including the elderly, adults and children in clinical risk groups. This is best achieved by offering Fluenz to healthy children in the age groups that contribute most to transmission, i.e. those aged 2 to 16 years.

Parents declining the nasal vaccine will need to speak to their GP to decide on the best course of action to protect their child.

For more information on this topic, see [web link 6](#)

This month's test question

How many MenC vaccinations should babies under one year of age receive?

One, two or three?

The answer's one. From 1 June this year, the vaccination at four months' of age was dropped, so they now have only one – at three months' of age. This means that all those babies who had a dose of Meningitec at three months' of age before 1 June should have completed their two-dose course with Meningitec by now. But we are still receiving orders for this vaccine for infants, which probably means some babies had their first dose of Meningitec after 1 June and are just completing their courses with the same vaccine. From now on though, we would expect all orders for the three-month dose of MenC vaccine to be for NeisVac-C.

Of course, once babies have turned 12 months they will need their second dose of MenC vaccine which is combined with Hib in the Menitorix vaccine. The third dose will be given in their early teenage years to boost their immunity at that age. Meningitec can continue to be used for this adolescent booster. See [web link 7](#) for more information on this recent change to the MenC vaccination programme.



Childhood vaccine stock takes

The National Vaccine Management Protocol states that vaccine stock should be audited and recorded every month and that records should be shared with district coordinators on a quarterly basis. ImmForm now offers practices a stock take facility where a count of childhood vaccines can be entered and from where results will automatically be shared with area team management as needed.

Access to this function is via the stock take menu on vaccine supply home page and full instructions are given in Helpsheet 21, which is attached to the menu and is available via the login page at [web link 8](#).

Resources

New flu poster highlights risk of flu to those with long-term conditions

Available as printed copies from the Publications orderline at [web link 9](#) or as a download at [web link 10](#), this poster is based on the media advertisement. It is primarily aimed at pharmacies but will also find a use in more general settings.

Green Book

The Rotavirus chapter has recently been updated – see [web link 11](#)



Vaccine scares – turning adversity to advantage

This lecture by Helen Bedford of University College London Institute of Child Health, reviews recent vaccine safety scares, and describes how we might learn from such events to ensure successful immunisation programmes in the future (see [web link 17](#)).

Measuring flu vaccine uptake in GP patients and healthcare workers

Guidance on collecting data and submitting it to the ImmForm website is now available at [web link 18](#), [web link 19](#) and [web link 20](#).

Vaccine wastage

This month's tip comes hard on the heels of the gales that affected southern parts of the UK in late October. Many power lines were brought down leading to vaccine fridge failures. When this happens, it's important that the routine protocol around vaccine storage and maintenance is followed. Please remember to follow the steps outlined in ImmForm Helpsheet 18 if your fridge temperature goes out of range, see [web link 12](#)

Related tips:

- Do NOT destroy any vaccines until you have established with individual manufacturers that this vaccine cannot be used.
- If your NHS vaccines do need to be disposed of, then DO fill in a 'Stock incident capture' form on the ImmForm website to ensure that all wastages are being recorded.

For further information on the actions to take in the event of a fridge failure please see Chapter 3 of Immunisation against infectious disease 'The Green Book' at [web link 13](#) and from Public Health England at [web link 14](#)

Please contact the ImmForm helpdesk on 0844 376 0040 or at helpdesk@immform.org.uk if you have any further queries about what to do in case of a power cut/fridge failure.

Vaccine supply

Fluenz expiry date

Reminder

Fluenz has a limited shelf-life and, like all vaccines, needs to be used before it exceeds its expiry date. Some Fluenz supplied for the children's programme for two- and three-year olds has an expiry date of 18, 23 or 24 December 2013. So, please ensure you check the vaccine is within its expiry date before using it. Fluenz is still available to order, and currently has a mid-January 2014 expiry date.

Infanrix

Supplies of Infanrix IPV are now available and can be ordered online for the pre-school infant booster programme using ImmForm ([web link 8](#)). Repevax continues to also be available for this programme.

Please contact the ImmForm Helpdesk on 0844 376 0040 if you are unsure which vaccine to order.

Zostavax

There continues to be a temporary delay with the supply of the shingles vaccine into the UK.

PHE is working closely with Sanofi Pasteur MSD (SPMSD) to restore supplies as quickly as possible but at present Zostavax is unavailable to order in the UK. Supplies are expected to be restored in December 2013.

Approximately 500,000 doses have already been distributed throughout the UK to start the programme, with around 100,000 doses remaining in GP practice fridges ready to be administered to patients.

The temporary supply issue is not expected to impact the overall programme to immunise 70- and 79-year-olds over the coming year. The vaccine can be administered to the two eligible cohorts at any time between 1 September 2013 and 31 August 2014. NHS customers should refer to the ImmForm website for the latest information on vaccine availability.

Zostavax is the vaccine being used for the new immunisation programme to protect against shingles that started on 1 September 2013, in line with the advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. Initially, it is being provided to 70- and 79-year-olds.

Typhoid vaccines

Sanofi Pasteur MSD continues to have limited stock of their typhoid vaccine, Typhim Vi. To ensure as much coverage as possible with the current stock, the number of doses per customer is being restricted until further notice.

Supplies of alternative polysaccharide vaccines Typherix and Hepatyrix (combined hepatitis A and typhoid vaccine) both manufactured by GlaxoSmithkline (GSK) also remain out of stock.

Janssen is currently supplying Vivotif, on a normal delivery basis. Orders can be placed on 0844 800 3907.

Yellow fever vaccine

Sanofi Pasteur MSD has experienced an unforeseen delay in the production of Stamaril single dose yellow fever vaccine. This situation is likely to continue until January 2014.

NaTHNaC is providing information on its website about which clinics have vaccine in stock and is working with the manufacturer, MHRA, PHE and the DH to manage the shortage. See [web link 15](#)

Flu vaccine strategic reserve in England

PHE will be holding a strategic reserve of 400,000 doses of inactivated trivalent injectable flu vaccine for use in England for the 2013/14 flu immunisation programme. GPs and other providers should have ordered sufficient flu vaccine for their at-risk patients, and the stockpile is an 'insurance policy', in case there are problems with supply.

The reserve will be available through ImmForm only if manufacturers have no supplies available to order. Updates will be posted on the ImmForm website. NHS health professionals should follow the steps below to access the vaccines.

More detailed information and answers to questions can be found at [web link 16](#)

The strategic reserve is separate from the flu vaccine (Fluenz) which has been centrally procured for the extension of the flu programme to two- and three-year-old children, which is available to order via ImmForm, see [web link 8](#)

Accessing the flu vaccine strategic reserve in England

If your practice has no stock or is running out:

1. First try contacting all suppliers to buy additional stock.
2. If none is available, find out if it is temporary or permanent. If temporary then place an order.
3. If no further stock is available from the suppliers, then speak to local colleagues and the NHS England area team screening and immunisation manager or co-ordinator to see if any supplies are available locally.
4. If no stock is available locally, you can order flu vaccine at [web link 8](#)
5. Vaccine suppliers advise PHE on their stock levels and the strategic reserve will only be accessible when there is no vaccine available to order from suppliers. Vaccines should be ordered sparingly to ensure equitable distribution. Vaccines will usually be delivered in one to two working days, once orders have been placed on ImmForm.

Movianto UK deliveries over Christmas and New Year holidays

Due to the Christmas and New Year holidays, there will be no vaccine deliveries or order processing by Movianto UK on:

- Wednesday 25 December
- Thursday 26 December
- Wednesday 1 January 2014

Deliveries normally scheduled for these days will not be rescheduled, so please bear this in mind when placing orders.

For example, if your delivery day is Wednesday 18 December, the cut off for placing an order for a delivery for use over the holiday period is 11:55 am on Monday 16 December. If you miss this date, the next Wednesday delivery will be Wednesday 8 January. The normal ordering and delivery cycle resumes on Thursday 2 January*. Please see the table below for the revised schedule.

Orders can still be placed on ImmForm on all days, but they will not be processed by Movianto UK for dispatch at their warehouse on the days listed, hence the revised order cut-off date.

We recommend that you have two to four weeks of vaccine stock held in your fridge, so you may wish to consider this when ordering for the holiday period. We also recommend that you have at least two contacts registered on ImmForm, as cover for leave etc. To register, please see the ImmForm Helpsheet 8 on how to register at [web link 22](#).

The Vaccine Supply and ImmForm Teams wish all their customers a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Delivery date	Order cut-off date	Order cut off-time
Monday 16/12/2013	Thursday 12/12/2013	11:55 am
Tuesday 17/12/2013	Friday 13/12/2013	11:55 am
Wednesday 18/12/2013	Monday 16/12/2013	11:55 am
Thursday 19/12/2013	Tuesday 17/12/2013	11:55 am
Friday 20/12/2013	Wednesday 18/12/2013	11:55 am
Monday 23/12/2013	Thursday 19/12/2013	11:55 am
Tuesday 24/12/2013	Friday 20/12/2013	11:55 am
Wednesday 25/12/2013	Closed - NO DELIVERIES	
Thursday 26/12/2013	Closed - NO DELIVERIES	
Friday 27/12/2013	Monday 23/12/2013	11:55 am
Monday 30/12/2013	Tuesday 24/12/2013	11:55 am
Tuesday 31/12/2013	Friday 27/12/2013	11:55 am
Wednesday 01/01/2014	Closed - NO DELIVERIES	
*Thursday 02/01/2014	Monday 30/12/2013	11:55 am
Friday 03/01/2014	Tuesday 31/12/2013	11:55 am

*As Scotland has a bank holiday on Thursday 2 January, no deliveries will be made to Scotland on that day.

If you do not receive your scheduled delivery on either the 24 or 31 December for reasons outside of the control of the distributor, then Movianto will make every effort to re-deliver the vaccines on the next working day available. To check the status of your deliveries please contact Movianto directly on 01234 248632 or email them on customercare.uk@movianto.com

Web links

- web link 1** <http://www.nhsemployers.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/NHS%20Flu%20fighter%20communications%20toolkit%20for%202013-14.pdf>
- web link 2** <http://www.nhsemployers.org/HealthyWorkplaces/StaffFluVaccination/Pages/Planning-your-campaign.aspx#1>
- web link 3** <http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0026239>
- web link 4** <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0196655313010985>
- web link 5** <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=Edelstein+and+Pebody>
- web link 6** <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/vaccines-and-gelatine-phe-response>
- web link 7** <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/meningococcal-c-menc-vaccination-programme>
- web link 8** <https://www.immform.dh.gov.uk>
- web link 9** http://www.orderline.dh.gov.uk/ecom_dh/public/home.jsf
- web link 10** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-serious-if-you-have-a-long-term-health-condition>
- web link 11** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rotavirus-the-green-book-chapter-27b>
- web link 12** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fridge-failures-immform-helpsheet-18>
- web link 13** <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immunisation-against-infectious-disease-the-green-book>
- web link 14** http://www.hpa.org.uk/webc/HPAwebFile/HPAweb_C/1267551139589
- web link 15** <http://www.nathnac.org/travel/>
- web link 16** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/accessing-the-flu-vaccine-strategic-reserve-in-england>
- web link 17** <http://youtu.be/E93hCJrKI54>
- web link 18** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/seasonal-influenza-vaccine-uptake-data-collection-guidance-gp-patients-all-practices-survey-england-2013-to-2014>
- web link 19** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/seasonal-influenza-frontline-healthcare-workers-vaccine-uptake-survey-2013-to-2014-data-collection-guidance>
- web link 20** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/seasonal-influenza-frontline-healthcare-workers-vaccine-uptake-data-collection-tool-2013-to-2014-guidance>
- web link 21** <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/vaccine-uptake>
- web link 22** www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-register-immform-helpsheet-8