

Key messages

Monday 4 October 2021 (v1)

The following provides key messages to support communications about the flu vaccination programme in the North East and North Cumbria. This includes specific messages for certain groups of people who are eligible for the free vaccine. This document is part of our toolkit which can be accessed here <https://www.doyourbit-nenc.co.uk/flu-toolkit-2021>

You can access the campaign website here www.doyourbit-nenc.co.uk/flu

Information is also available here www.nhs.uk/flu vaccine

1. Overarching narrative and messages

About our vaccination programme in the North East and North Cumbria

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, the region's NHS vaccinated record numbers of people against flu last winter and it's now gearing up to do the same again this year.

The region's NHS is appealing to the public, and health and care staff, to 'DoYourBit' and get the free flu vaccine this year - with fears that that flu virus is set to return and will be circulating alongside COVID-19 and other viruses.

Health experts are concerned this year could be one of the worst for flu infections because immunity has dropped off due to measures designed to control the spread of COVID-19.

It doesn't mean flu has gone away. Mathematical modelling indicates the flu season could be up to 50% larger than typically seen. It is also possible it will begin earlier than usual.

Flu really is the last thing people need on top of everything else.

So the NHS is asking people of the North East and North Cumbria to pull together and do their bit by getting their free flu vaccine.

And they are reminding people that flu can be very serious and can even kill - it spreads easily so you can be putting others at risk.

Not only that but if you get flu and coronavirus at the same time you're more likely to be more seriously ill.

Those most at risk from flu are also more vulnerable to COVID-19.

Yet the best protection - one vaccine in the arm - is easy to get, it works and is free for more people than ever before.

The NHS is now pulling out all the stops to deliver what will be its biggest flu vaccination programme – with an estimated 1.5 million people eligible for a free flu jab.

At the same time, COVID-19 boosters are being offered for those who had their last vaccine more than six months ago, and fall into the 'at-risk' groups. With people being reassured that it's perfectly safe to have both vaccines at the same time if you are offered them together.

The flu vaccination programme has been extended to include secondary children from years seven to year 11. That means all children aged two to 15 can get a free flu vaccine. The offer for 50 to 64 year olds will also continue this year as we know hospitalisation from COVID-19 also increases from the age of 50.

While record numbers of people came forward for their flu vaccine last year - health chiefs say uptake still remains low in some areas - meaning many people are still at risk of becoming seriously ill - such as those with medical conditions, children aged two -three, pregnant women, carers and care workers.

Just like the COVID-19 vaccine has reduced the risk of serious illness and hospitalisation. It's the same for flu – get the vaccine and you will reduce your risk of becoming seriously ill.

2. Main key messages

Main call to actions – for most groups

- When you get your invite, book your free flu vaccination
- You might be offered your flu vaccine and COVID-19 vaccine booster at the same time – it's safe to have them together.

2.1 Flu vaccine and flu virus messages

- The NHS is asking people of the North East and North Cumbria to pull together and do their bit by getting their free flu vaccine.
- And they are reminding people that flu can be very serious and even kill - it spreads easily so you could be putting others at risk.
- Not only that but if you get flu and coronavirus at the same time you're more likely to be more seriously ill.
- Those most at risk from flu are also more vulnerable to COVID-19.

- Yet the best protection - one vaccine in the arm - is easy to get, it works and is free for more people than ever before.
- **Don't underestimate the flu virus.** It can be serious especially for older people and those in vulnerable groups such as people with medical conditions.
- **Having the flu vaccine will also stop you spreading flu to other people** who may be more at risk of serious problems from flu. 77% of people with flu show no symptoms but they can pass on the virus to vulnerable family and friends.
- **You can't get flu from the flu vaccine.** Some people may experience a mild fever, up to 48 hours after having their vaccine, as their immune system responds to the vaccine, but this is not flu.
- The vaccine works by boosting antibodies, helping the body to fight off the virus. It can take 10 to 14 days for the flu vaccine to work
- **The flu vaccine is safe.** All vaccines are thoroughly tested to make sure they will not harm you or your child. Serious side effects of the flu vaccine are very rare, and flu vaccines have a good safety record. You may have a mild fever and aching muscles for a couple of days after having the vaccine, and your arm may be a bit sore where you were injected. The nasal spray flu vaccine has few side effects, most commonly getting a runny nose after the vaccination for a few days.
- **Being healthy won't stop you getting the flu or passing it on!** If you're in an eligible group make sure you get vaccinated.
- **You might be invited to have a COVID-19 booster** alongside your flu vaccine – it is safe to have them both at the same time.

2.2 COVID-19 and flu messages

- Having a flu vaccination will not protect you against COVID-19. The flu vaccine is designed to prevent infections from influenza viruses. COVID-19 is a different virus. If you haven't already, please take up the offer of a COVID-19 vaccine.
- If you've had the COVID-19 vaccination it won't protect you against flu.
- Millions of people are being offered a COVID-19 vaccine booster too – and it is safe to have both flu and COVID-19 vaccines at the same time.
- Flu spreads easily and it can be very serious and even kill. For some people flu can be as serious as COVID-19 and those most at risk from flu are also more vulnerable to Covid-19.
- It will be difficult to spot the difference between COVID-19 and flu since the symptoms are similar. The main symptoms of COVID-19 are:
 - o High temperature
 - o New, continuous cough
 - o Loss or change to your sense of smell or taste
 - o Even if you only have one of the above symptoms, it could be COVID-19, so follow the latest NHS guidance which currently is stay at home and get a test.

- For the most up to date NHS advice on treating flu (www.nhs.uk/conditions/flu/) The latest guidance on COVID-19 (at www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-Covid-19/symptoms/).

2.3 Safe to attend messages

- Wherever you receive your vaccine, teams will be making sure that there are strict infections control procedures in place. You can expect staff to be wearing some PPE (such as a face mask or visor).
- Please do your bit by wearing a mask, washing your hands and keeping your distance. Don't attend your appointment if you suspect you have coronavirus. Self-isolate and get a test.
- Your vaccination may be given by someone different or somewhere different - so that we don't have lots of people in waiting areas and to ensure we get as many people vaccinated as possible.
- You may be asked to book an appointment with your GP or pharmacist but some areas may also offer drop-in appointments too.

2.4 Preventing the spread messages

- Although the flu vaccine offers you the best protection against the virus - like COVID-19 - you can have no symptoms but still spread flu to your friends and family. Why take the risk? Get your flu vaccine this year.
- You can do your bit by remembering to wash your hands, wear a mask and social distance. If you sneeze – remember to catch it, bin it and kill it. Doing all of these things will protect you from both.
- Adults can spread the flu virus from one day before, to five days after symptoms start. Why take the risk? Get your flu vaccine.
- Young children are able to spread flu for up to 10 days so it is important to have them vaccinated to protect older and vulnerable members of your family.

3. Messages for specific groups

These messages are supported by specific visuals and targeted social media messages and advertising.

3.1 For people with medical / long term conditions

Call to action 1: When you get your invitation, book your appointment

Call to action 2: Book your free flu vaccination with your GP or your local pharmacist

- If you have certain health conditions, make sure you get your free flu vaccine – it will protect you and your family from complications and possible serious illness. The last thing you need on top of everything else is flu. When you get your invitation, book your appointment.

- You might be invited to have a COVID-19 booster alongside your flu vaccine – it is safe to have them both at the same time.
- If you have a chronic respiratory disease, such as severe asthma, bronchitis or COPD, make sure you get your free flu vaccine this year. Did you know that people with these respiratory diseases are 7 times more likely to die if they catch flu than someone without an underlying health condition? Why take the risk?
- If you have a chronic heart disease such as heart failure make sure you get your free flu vaccine this year. People with chronic heart disease are 11 times more likely to die if they catch flu than someone without an underlying health condition. Why take the risk?
- If you have chronic kidney disease make sure you get your free flu vaccine this year. People with chronic kidney disease are 19 times more likely to die if they catch flu than those who have no other underlying health condition. Why take the risk?
- If you have chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis, make sure you get your free flu vaccine this year. People with chronic liver disease are approximately 48 times more likely to die if they develop flu than someone with no underlying health condition. Why take the risk?
- If you have a weakened immune system as a result of conditions such as HIV or AIDS, or because you are taking medicines such as steroids or chemotherapy, make sure you get your free flu vaccine this year. People in these groups are 47 times more likely to die if they catch flu than those who are not. Why take the risk?
- If you have diabetes make sure you get your free flu vaccine this year. It's never been more important. People with diabetes are 6 times more likely to die if they catch flu than someone without an underlying health condition. Why take the risk?
- If you or a loved one has a chronic neurological disease – such as cerebral palsy, motor neurone disease, MS or Parkinson's – it's really important you protect yourself from flu by getting your free flu vaccine. Why take the risk?

3.2 For pregnant women

Call to action: Ask your midwife, GP or pharmacist about your free flu vaccine.

- If you're pregnant you can become seriously ill from flu.
- The flu vaccine is the safest way to help protect you and your baby from becoming seriously ill from flu.
- You can have the vaccination at any time in your pregnancy and it offers your baby immunity to flu in the first few months their life.
- You might be invited to have a COVID-19 booster alongside your flu vaccine – it is safe to have them both at the same time.

3.3 For carers

Call to action: If you care for someone, speak to your GP or pharmacist about getting your free flu vaccine this year.

- Do you care for someone? If you're the main carer for someone speak to your GP or pharmacist about getting your free flu vaccine this year. The last thing you or the person you care for needs on top of everything else is flu.

3.4 For parents/guardians

Call to action

1. Kids back to school? #DoYourBit look out for information from their school asking you to give consent so that your child can have their free flu nasal spray vaccine this year.
 2. Kids back to school? #DoYourBit complete the form asking you to give consent for your child to have the free flu vaccine at school.
 3. Is your child aged 2-3 years old? DoYourBit to protect your child and others from flu by making sure they get their flu nasal spray vaccine. Get in touch with your GP practice to book your appointment.
 4. Children age 12-15 may also be offered the COVID-19 vaccine at the same time at school. It's safe to have the vaccines together. Many childhood immunisations are given on the same day.
- DoYourBit and protect your child and others from flu by making sure they get their flu vaccine. The nasal spray vaccine is free for children aged 2-3 years, those in primary and in secondary schools up to year 11. It is also free for children and young people who have a medical condition from the age of six months.
 - Flu is serious and with COVID-19 virus circulating - it's never been more important for your child to get the free flu vaccine.
 - Flu can be serious for children and lead to complications like bronchitis and pneumonia, and painful ear infections. Protect them this year with a free flu nasal spray vaccine.
 - Flu vaccination of children is needle-free for those aged 2-17 years. The nasal spray is given as a single squirt up each nostril; it's quick, painless and more effective in children than an injectable vaccine.
 - Children can pass on the flu virus to others. You can protect your child and others by getting them a flu vaccine this year.
 - If your child gets flu they could miss valuable time at school. Protect them with the nasal spray flu vaccine this year.
 - If your child is in primary or secondary school (up to year 11) they can have a free flu vaccine. Don't forget to complete your consent form so they can have their nasal spray at school and be protected from virus.

- Have you given your consent? If your child is at primary school or secondary school up to year 11 you will receive information asking you to give your consent so your child can have their vaccination. #DoYourBit and give consent.

3.5 COVID-19 messages for children

1. Children aged 12-15 are being offered the opportunity to have a first dose of the COVID-19 vaccination at the same time as having their flu vaccination. It's safe to have the vaccines together. Many childhood immunisations are given on the same day.
2. Being vaccinated against COVID-19 will reduce the need for young people to have time-off school and reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 within schools.
3. Being vaccinated against COVID-19 will provide protection to young people and reduce the disruption to face to face education. This will help to keep young people emotionally well and happier.
4. Already children aged 12-15 at greater risk of serious COVID-19, or who are household contacts of severely immunosuppressed individuals, are offered two doses.
5. Children will be offered Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. It is safe and effective for this age group. And the same as adults there is a 15 minute waiting period after receiving Pfizer.
6. The vaccine is given as an injection in the arm. Side-effects are usually very mild and short term and not everyone gets them. Usually a sore arm, feeling tired, aches, headache or chills. Rest and paracetamol will make a young person feel better.
7. Parents will be asked to consent in the same way they do for the flu vaccine.
8. These [NHS leaflets](#) provide more information for parents and young people on the vaccine, including how it works and what to expect after COVID-19 vaccination.

3.6 University students (with a medical condition)

- Just started at Uni? Did you know if you are living with a medical condition you are eligible for a free flu vaccine? Make sure you register with a local GP so you can get your free flu vaccine this year or pop along to a pharmacy. It's never been more important.
- If you're living with a long-term health condition, there's one thing you can do – go get your free flu vaccination.

3.7 NHS and care workforce

- If you work for the NHS or in social care you are eligible for a free flu vaccination. Do your bit to protect yourself, your colleagues, loved ones and the people you care for by contacting your employer to find out more about your free flu vaccination.

- You might be invited to have a COVID-19 booster alongside your flu vaccine – it is safe to have them both at the same time.

Care workers/support workers

Call to action

- You are entitled to a free flu vaccination this year so you can protect yourself, colleagues and the people you care for. Ask your employer about what arrangements are in place or contact your GP or pop in to a pharmacy. Bring some ID with you.
- You might be invited to have a COVID-19 booster alongside your flu vaccine – it is safe to have them both at the same time.

Messages

- Are you a care worker? You are entitled to a free flu vaccination this year so you can protect yourself, colleagues and the people you care for. Ask your employer about what arrangements are in place.
- Are you a care worker? If you provide health or social care to someone through Direct Payments (personal budgets) or Personal Health Budgets (such as Personal Assistants), or both you can have a free flu vaccine this year to protect yourself and the people you look after. Contact your GP or pharmacy to book an appointment.
- Flu really is the last thing you, or the people you care for, need right now on top of everything else. Flu can be very serious and spreads easily. Get the vaccine - it gives you the best protection – it's safe and it's free for care workers.
- Are you a care worker? Get your flu vaccine and stop it spreading. 77% of people with flu show no symptoms but they can pass on the virus to vulnerable family and friends. Flu is the last thing they need.
- The flu vaccine doesn't give you flu. Some people may experience a mild fever, up to 48 hours after having their vaccine, as their immune system responds to the vaccine, but this is not flu

Messages about #DoYourBit campaign

The region's NHS is asking communities and organisations across the North East and North Cumbria to keep doing their bit to help protect each other and their communities.

Over the past year, and more, the support for the NHS and care organisations has been amazing but there are concerns that the winter months ahead will continue to be tough.

The NHS is therefore asking people to keep playing their part to protect themselves and each other this winter. And is saying a huge thank you to everyone for their support during what has been its toughest year yet.

Keep doing your bit by:

- **Getting your flu vaccine to protect yourself and others** - more people than ever before are now eligible for the free vaccine.
- **Getting your COVID-19 vaccine, it's never too late** - whether it's your first or second dose, the offer is still there.
- **If you are invited, take up the offer of a COVID-19 booster.** It's safe to have this alongside your flu vaccine and it is safe to have them both at the same time too.
- **Seek help from the NHS if you need it.** The NHS is here for you if you are unwell or concerned about your health. Don't delay seeking help or advice.
- **Choose the right service for you needs** - think pharmacy, GP and 111.nhs.uk first; keep A&E for life threatening emergencies only.
- **Wear a face covering and keep your hands clean** when visiting any healthcare settings – such as hospitals, clinics, GP surgeries, dentists, pharmacists and patient transport.
- **Keep your appointment.** If you can't make it, let us know so we can offer it to someone else.
- **Be kind** – our teams are doing their best to look after people. Any form of abuse will not be tolerated.

Thank you from your NHS.