



Welcome to the third edition of Improving Health Together, a public health factsheet to support the PCT's annual programme of local public health campaigns. This factsheet focuses on influenza, exploring some of the issues and contains information, news and tips to support frontline practitioners. The aim is to deliver effective key messages in relation to this campaign and signposts available resources.

Every year new strains of influenza emerge, necessitating an annual flu vaccination campaign. It affects 10-15% of the UK population every year.

What is the difference between colds and Influenza?

- ◆ Colds are caused by more than 100 different viruses. Microscopic droplets are passed from person to person by sneezing, coughing or by direct contact with the infected persons secretions.
- ◆ Influenza is caused by only 3 types of virus, but is caught in the same way as a cold. Both are viral airborne infections upon which antibiotics have no effect.

Influenza

Issue 3.2 — September 2008



How serious is influenza?

- ◆ Influenza is characterised by the sudden onset of fever, chills, headache, myalgia and extreme fatigue.
- ◆ For healthy individuals, it is an unpleasant usually self-limiting disease with recovery in 2-7 days. The illness may be complicated by (and may present as) bronchiolitis, secondary bacterial pneumonia or (in children) otitis media.
- ◆ Severe influenza can be complicated by meningitis, encephalitis or meningoencephalitis.
- ◆ Serious illness and mortality from influenza are highest among neonates, older people. Those with underlying pathology, particularly chronic respiratory and cardiac disease, and those who are immunosuppressed are also susceptible.

The influenza vaccine

Vaccination has been recommended in the UK since the late 1960s, with the aim of directly protecting those at a higher risk of serious morbidity and mortality. In 2000, the policy was extended to include all people aged 65 years or over.

Who should receive the influenza vaccination

- ◆ All those aged 65 years and over.
- ◆ All those aged 6 months or over in a clinical risk group:

Chronic respiratory disease and continuous or repeated use of inhaled or systematic steroids or with previous exacerbations requiring hospital admission, e.g. asthmatics

Chronic heart disease

Chronic renal disease

Chronic liver disease

Chronic neurological disease

Diabetes

Immunosuppression (lowered immunity due to disease or treatment, e.g. steroid medication or cancer treatment).

- ◆ Those living in long-stay residential homes or other long-stay care facilities where rapid spread is likely to follow introduction of infection and cause high morbidity and mortality (this does not include prisons, young offender institutions, university halls of residence, etc).
- ◆ In addition to people in the clinical risk groups set out above, GPs should take into account the risk of influenza infection exacerbating any underlying disease that the patient may have, as well as the risk of serious illness from influenza itself. GPs should consider on an individual basis the clinical needs of their patients including:

Individuals with Multiple Sclerosis and related conditions

Hereditary and degenerative diseases of the Central Nervous System.

- ◆ All employees directly involved in patient care should be encouraged to have the influenza immunisation.

Who should not have the vaccination?

The influenza vaccination should not be given to individuals if they:

Are allergic to eggs

Have had a serious reaction to the flu vaccine in the past

Currently have flu symptoms with a temperature of 39°C or above—the vaccination should be delayed until they have recovered.

Seasonal influenza campaign

The table below shows the vaccine uptake (%) for NYYPCT over the last two campaigns, compared to the national figures.

Eligible Groups	UK 07/08	NYYPCT 07/08	NYYPCT 06/07
	%	%	%
Over 65	74	76.2	75.7
Below 65 at risk	45	50.4	46.1
6 months to 2 years at risk	6.7	14.4	14.9
2 years to 16 years at risk	22.3	32.6	29.5
16-65 years at risk	48.6	52.3	48.2

(Health Protection Informatics, 2008)

Within the Yorkshire and Humber region NYYPCT had the third highest uptake for flu vaccination of over 65's and the "at risk groups". For the 08/09 campaign NYYPCT seasonal flu planning group would like to encourage further uptake in the younger age at risk groups.

For more detailed information on 2008/09 seasonal influenza campaign see the Chief Medical Officer's letter:

www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Lettersandcirculars/Professionalletters/Chiefmedicalofficerletters/DH_083812

Prevention and self care

When is influenza most common?

Influenza spreads rapidly, especially in closed communities, with most cases occurring in the UK during a 6-8 week period during the winter. Guidance for outbreaks of influenza in care homes is available in poster format from the NYYPCT Infection Prevention and Control Nurse, 01845 573869.



So what can be done to prevent us getting the flu?

Ensure that those who need immunising are being asked to attend for their influenza vaccination.

Eat a well balanced diet, get plenty of exercise and rest .

Make sure people have a stock of their regularly used flu/cold remedies which can be used at the first signs of flu.

What to do if you get the flu?

Treat the symptoms with appropriate over the counter remedies, but also be aware of the interactions of those remedies with any other regularly taken medication.

Get plenty of rest and sleep.

Drink plenty of fluids, but avoid alcohol.

If symptoms persist, or worsen, or improvement is not noted after 2-7 days, it may be necessary to see a doctor, particularly if a person has had the influenza vaccination—an antiviral medication may be prescribed.

What to do to prevent the spread of the virus

- ◆ After blowing your nose, dispose of tissues in a pedal operated bin, then wash your hands with soap and water.
- ◆ When coughing, use a tissue where possible, avoiding coughing straight into hands. If you do so, wash hands with soap and water afterwards.

Further advice can be found at:

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/articles/article.aspx?articleID=163

www.nhs.uk/conditions/Flu/



Avian or Bird Flu (the current strain is known as H5N1)

This is a disease of birds and can only be caught by being in the close vicinity of an infected bird or by eating uncooked meat or eggs from diseased birds. It does not pass easily from birds to people. People have become infected with this virus, but this is rare. The WHO is monitoring this virus closely and at present advises that there is no sustained person to person transmission of H5N1 avian influenza.

Poultry workers

Poultry workers are being offered free influenza immunisation for all those who work in close contact with poultry. This is the third year such a programme is being run. This is being carried out as a precautionary public health measure to reduce the risk of poultry workers contracting both avian and human influenza simultaneously.

Pandemic Flu

Pandemic flu occurs when infection of humans with a new virus has been confirmed and a high incidence of disease, and rapid international spread, has been observed. Past influenza pandemics have led to high levels of illness, death, social disruption and economic loss.

Vaccination training

All practitioners involved in administering vaccinations or giving vaccination information should attend a half day update training session once every two years after attending an initial immunisation training session. Practitioners must attend the training sessions to comply with the PCT's Patient Group Directions (PGD's). Flyers and booking forms have been previously circulated, however if more details are required please contact the Public Health Nurse Team on 01845 573800.

Websites

NHS Immunisation Information

www.immunisation.nhs.uk/Vaccines/Flu/Flu

The most comprehensive, up-to-date and accurate source of information on vaccines, disease and immunisation in the UK.



Department of Health

www.dh.gov.uk/en/PublicHealth/Flu/Index.htm

Categorised policy documents, non-clinical guidance, newsletters, links and resources can be accessed here.



Health Protection Agency

www.hpa.org.uk/

Information and advice, detailed guidance and Epidemiological Data.



NHS Direct

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/articles/article.aspx?articleID=163

Find everything you need to know about medical conditions, symptoms, health tests, treatments, operations and services in the Health encyclopaedia.



Clinical Knowledge Summaries

www.cks.library.nhs.uk/patient_information_leaflet/flu



Practical & reliable information about common conditions which helps healthcare professionals make evidence-based decisions about the healthcare of their patients.

World Health Organization

www.who.int/topics/influenza/en/

Links to descriptions of activities, reports, news and events.



Winter Fuel Payment

www.thepensionsservice.gov.uk/winterfuel/

The Government will again be making Winter Fuel Payments to most people aged 60 or over for winter 2008/09.



North Yorkshire and York PCT

www.nyypct.nhs.uk/

For more information visit our website.



NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/conditions/Flu/



The new service that helps you to make the most of your health and get the best out of the NHS.

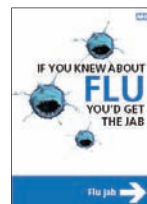
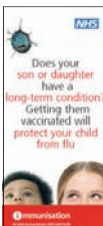
Order your free resources

These are the resources recommended by your Public Health team for use with the Influenza campaign.

Flu immunisation Communications Campaign 2008/09

If you knew about flu you'd get the jab

A5 leaflet available in several languages and formats. A3 and A4 posters.



Protecting children at increased risk from flu leaflet

Protecting health and social care workers from flu

Leaflet and A3/A4 posters



Tel: 0300 123 1002 or download the [order form](#).

Department of Health Posters Tel: 0300 123 1002



The Consumer Health Information Centre (CHIC)

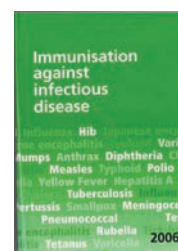
www.chic.org.uk/chicmco/spotlight/

[downloads/coldandflu.pdf](#)

Downloadable leaflet.

See the new Green Book 'Immunisation against infectious diseases'

Chapter 19 page 185-200 'influenza'. The new Green book was distributed to all health professionals from December 2006. If you haven't received one, contact 0845 954 0000 or e-mail greenbook@boardsystem.com



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