

To: all NHS frontline workers

PAC number: 001275

25 November 2019

Dear colleagues,

Please join your colleagues and protect our patients by getting your flu vaccination this year

Have you had your flu jab?

We have and it feels good to know that we've acted to protect ourselves from the getting flu and potentially spreading it to colleagues, families and others.

If you haven't had your jab, we urge you to take up the offer of free vaccination against flu as soon as possible; and to remind your patients to get their vaccine.

As we all know, flu can have serious and even fatal consequences, especially for the most vulnerable patients, such as young children, pregnant women and the elderly.

Healthcare workers are at an increased risk of contracting flu, but because more than half of infections bring mild or no symptoms, it is possible for us to have and pass on the virus to patients without us being aware.

Therefore, [vaccination of healthcare workers](#) is a critical part of the [NHS's flu prevention strategy](#). Flu-related staff sickness absence can also significantly affect your ability to deliver the services safely patients need and value. In fact, research suggests that a 10% increase in NHS staff vaccination reduces healthcare worker sickness absence by about 10%.

We are proud that frontline healthcare worker vaccination rates have increased significantly since the programme began in 2002. Last winter, the overall rate topped 70% for the first time, with almost three quarters of a million colleagues making the choice to protect themselves and their patients. This is a great achievement, and we want to thank everyone who made it possible.

Despite that continued progress, we can do better. We have already ensured that those trusts with the lowest uptake rates last year are buddied with more successful organisations, so they learn how to make it easier for busy staff to get vaccinated. And, we will be monitoring progress weekly to see what further support they might need.

We all have a shared professional responsibility to ensure the best possible outcomes for patients this winter and the flu vaccine is the best defence we have against the spread of flu. So, let's do our duty and take this easy but important step to protect our patients and ourselves, this winter.

Ruth May, Chief Nursing for England
Professor Stephen Powis, NHS National Medical Director
Dr Keith Ridge, Chief Pharmaceutical Officer for England
Professor Jacqueline Dunkley-Bent, Chief Midwifery Officer for England
Suzanne Rastrick OBE, Chief Allied Health Professions Officer

