

28th August 2020

FAO: CCG, GP and community pharmacy colleagues.

Dear colleague,

Re: the national flu immunisation programme 2020/21, with reference to the 50-64 year old cohort.

As the flu season approaches, it is more important than ever that we work together to make sure that those most at risk receive their flu vaccination in a timely and safe way.

The potential risk of flu and COVID-19 co-circulating this winter highlights how essential the flu immunisation programme will be to protect vulnerable people and alleviate pressures on the health and care system.

Some colleagues may already be receiving enquiries from patients about the expansion of the programme, and in particular requests for vaccination from those in the 50-64 year old age group who are not otherwise in a clinical risk group. However, in a phased approach, the 50-64 year old age group will not be offered vaccination until November and December, subject to sufficient vaccine supply.

This is to ensure that those most at risk of flu are vaccinated first with sufficient vaccine supply and protected as a first priority. This does not apply to those aged 50-64 who are in a risk group for flu and should be invited in the first phase of vaccination as usual.

This season, we want to achieve maximum uptake in existing eligible groups to protect those who are most at risk from flu, or in the case of children to reduce transmission to other members of the community.

We aim to achieve a minimum 75% uptake in our eligible groups and 100% in our frontline health and social care workers. The programme is ambitious to provide the greatest protection and reduce strain on our healthcare system this winter. We also aim to complete vaccination of the existing eligible cohorts by November.

Accompanying this letter is information that can be sent out to patients in this age group, a poster that can be displayed online or physically and a text message that can be adapted and sent out.

If patients do contact you for appointments, please explain that the vaccine will not be available until November subject to availability and do not invite patients to attend for a vaccine before then. Patients can be reassured that the programme is being organised to prioritise those most at risk, and that once we have vaccine supply for their age group then they will be invited. Patients do not need to contact their practice themselves. Notice will be given so that practices and pharmacies can prepare for the vaccination of this cohort.

The following phased prioritisation can be used for vaccinating eligible groups in this programme:

Phase 1: from September 2020 to November 2020

- people living in long-stay residential care homes or other long-stay care facilities i.e. patients in residential, nursing and learning disability care homes



- people aged 65 years or over (including those becoming age 65 years by 31 March 2021)
- those aged from six months to less than 65 years of age, in a clinical risk group (list in appendix)
- all pregnant women (including those women who become pregnant during the flu season)
- people on the NHS Shielded Patient List for COVID-19 and household members of those on the NHS Shielded Patient List, or of immunocompromised individuals
- those who are in receipt of a carer's allowance, or who are the main carer of an older or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill
- all frontline health and social care staff including health and social care workers employed through Direct Payments (personal budgets) and/or Personal Health Budgets, such as Personal Assistants, to deliver domiciliary care to patients and service users.
- all children aged two to eleven (but not twelve years or older) on 31 August 2020

Phase 2: November and December 2020

- individuals between 50-64 years, following prioritisation of other eligible groups and subject to vaccine supply

We recognise that delivering this programme will require concerted efforts and collaborative working across the NHS, local authorities and voluntary and community sectors. The importance cannot be underestimated, and we recognise your efforts to deliver this programme in challenging times.

Thank you for your continued dedication to vaccinating and protecting patients in your area and for your assistance in achieving the aims of the 2020/21 flu immunisation programme.

Best wishes,



Cath Fenton
Consultant Lead Screening and Immunisation and Head of Public Health
NHS England and NHS Improvement – East of England

For further information please email england.immsqa@nhs.net

Appendix: Clinical risk groups for flu vaccination

n.b. Patients with chronic neurological disease, liver disease, asplenia, those who are immunocompromised and those with learning difficulty are considered extremely vulnerable.

- chronic (long-term) respiratory disease, such as severe asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or bronchitis
- chronic heart disease, such as heart failure
- chronic kidney disease at stage three, four or five
- chronic liver disease
- chronic neurological disease, such as Parkinson's disease or motor neurone disease
- learning disability
- diabetes
- splenic dysfunction or asplenia
- a weakened immune system due to disease (such as HIV/AIDS) or treatment (such as cancer treatment)
- morbidly obese (defined as BMI of 40 and above)