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FLU

IS A KILLER

Flu vaccination

Why is flu serious?

Flu spreads easily and can cause serious illnesses which need to be treated in hospital. There are outbreaks every year, usually in winter. Flu is not the same as a bad cold. It causes many deaths.

Does the vaccine work?

Yes, the vaccine usually prevents flu in 4 to 6 people in every 10 who have it. Flu viruses are constantly changing, the vaccine is changed each year to match the new flu viruses.

How will I know if I have flu?

When people get flu they tend to become ill quite quickly. Symptoms include fever, chills, headaches and aching muscles, often with a cough and sore throat. Often people who get flu feel so ill they need to stay in bed for a few days.

What should I do if I get flu?

The best remedy is to rest at home, keep warm and drink plenty of water. You can take paracetamol or ibuprofen to lower a high temperature and relieve aches if necessary.

Use a tissue when you sneeze or cough and wash your hands or use hand sanitizer to help stop flu spreading.

Catch it, Bin it, Kill it!

Antibiotics won't help

There are medicines called antivirals that can be given to those most at risk from flu. These may help if taken within 2 days of the start of the illness.

If you are at increased risk of flu and its complications, and think you may have it, you should talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist, urgently.

If you are in a risk group, get flu and haven't had the vaccine this flu season, you should have it as soon as you are feeling better. This will protect you against other types of flu.

What harm can flu do?

Flu can lead to serious illnesses such as bronchitis and pneumonia which may need hospital treatment.

Flu is more serious if you have certain long term illnesses, are pregnant or are 65 years of age or older.

In a normal winter, thousands of people will die from flu related illnesses in the UK.

Am I at greater risk from the effects of flu?

Even if you feel healthy, if you have one of the following conditions, you are at increased risk of complications from flu and should have a flu vaccination:

- A heart problem.
- A chest complaint or breathing difficulties, including asthma that requires regular steroid inhalers or tablets.

- Kidney disease.
- Lowered immunity due to disease or treatment (such as steroid or cancer treatment).
- Liver disease.
- Had a stroke (or mini stroke).
- Diabetes.
- A neurological condition, for example multiple sclerosis (MS), cerebral palsy or post-polio syndrome.
- A problem with your spleen, for example sickle cell disease, or you have had your spleen removed.
- Adult with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 40 or more.

You should also have the flu vaccination if you are:

- Pregnant.
- Aged 65 years or over.
- Living in a residential or nursing home.

Carers

If you care for someone who's health:

- Would be at risk if you became ill with flu;
- Are a member of a voluntary organisation providing care/planned first aid;
- Are a community first responder.

You should have a free flu vaccine from your GP surgery or community pharmacy.

Health and social care workers

If you are a health or social care worker with face to face contact with patients or clients, you should have a flu vaccination to protect yourself and the people you care for.

Your employer is responsible for paying for your vaccination.

If you deliver care on a voluntary basis the vaccine is available from your GP or some community pharmacies.

Pregnant women

If you are pregnant, you should have a flu vaccine to protect yourself and your unborn child.

If a pregnant woman gets flu, her baby is more likely to be born early or with a low birth weight, be stillborn or die within their first week. The vaccine also protects the baby in the first 4–6 months of life when flu can be very serious.

Children

Children from the age of six months with a health condition should have a flu vaccine every year. A nasal spray flu vaccine is offered to these children aged 2-17 years of age. The vaccine is also offered to some children in school.

The vaccine helps protect children from catching flu and also helps stop them spreading flu to others. There is a separate children's flu leaflet which provides more information.

I had a flu vaccine last year. Do I need one this year?

Yes, if you are in a risk group for flu you need to have a flu vaccine **every** year.

Is there anyone who should not have a flu vaccine?

There are very few people who cannot have a flu vaccine. People who have previously had a serious allergic reaction to a flu vaccine (or any part of it) should not have that flu vaccine again.

Tell the nurse or doctor if you have a serious egg allergy. You can still be vaccinated but they need to know because some flu vaccines are not suitable and a very small number of people should have their flu vaccine in hospital.

People who are unwell with a high temperature should delay vaccination until they are feeling better.

A runny nose, cough or other minor illness are not reasons to delay a flu vaccination.

Will I get any side effects?

Flu vaccines are very safe. After having the vaccine, some people get a slight temperature, feel tired, have a headache, or have aching muscles for a day or two.

After the injection, your arm may be a bit red and sore.

Other side effects are very rare.

Flu vaccines are quick and safe, and could prevent weeks of serious illness.

Will the flu vaccine give me flu?

No, the flu vaccine will not give you flu.

Will the flu vaccine protect me completely?

The vaccine usually offers good protection against flu in the flu season it is given.

Protection starts around two weeks after the vaccination.

You may still get flu even after vaccination but often with milder symptoms.

Flu vaccines do not protect against colds and other flu-like illnesses.

What do I need to do next?

If you are in any of the groups recommended to have a free flu vaccine, you can have it at your GP practice, some community pharmacies or if you work in health or social care, you should talk to your employer.

If your child is in the age range for routine vaccination, you should be contacted by your GP or school nursing service.

Where can I get more information?

Visit www.beatflu.org

You can find out more about flu vaccines, including vaccine contents and potential side effects, at www.medicines.org.uk/emc/ by entering the name of the vaccine in the search box and looking at the patient information leaflet (PIL).

A schedule showing which immunisations are routinely offered in Wales is available from www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/livewell/vaccinations/Leaflets/

If you have any questions or want more information, talk to your doctor or nurse, call NHS Direct Wales on **0845 46 47** or visit www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/

To order more copies of this leaflet, email: hplibrary@wales.nhs.uk or telephone **029 2010 4650**.

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