

Thousands in the Sussex to be vaccinated against the flu virus this winter

Flu vaccination clinics across Sussex are underway this September and the NHS is encouraging anyone who is eligible for a free flu vaccination to book an appointment with their GP or pharmacist, as soon as they receive an invitation.

Every year the flu virus kills people and hospitalises many more. This year it is even more important people who are most at risk of flu have their free flu vaccination. All clinics will run in line with infection prevention control and social distancing measures will be in place.

For the first time, children in school Year 7, and household contacts and carers of those on the NHS Shielded Patient List, are all eligible for the free vaccination. These groups are in addition to people aged over 65, those under 65 with long-term health conditions, pregnant women, children aged 2 and 3 and children in primary school.

Allison Cannon, Chief Nurse Officer for Sussex NHS commissioners said:

“This year with both the flu virus and Covid-19 circulating flu immunisation is more important than ever to reduce infections, protect each other and protect the NHS.

“There is an expanded list of priority groups this year and we are offering the vaccine to children aged from 2 to 11, as well as those over the age of 65 and anyone with chronic illness including diabetes and weight problems. So, if you have a Body Mass Index of more than 40 or a chronic illness or learning disability, look after yourself and protect the NHS by having the flu jab.”

People aged between 50 and 64 who are not in a clinical at-risk group may also be offered a free flu vaccination later in the year, providing there is enough vaccine available. This is to ensure that those who are most at risk are vaccinated first. Anyone of any age, including those between 50-64, who is a household member or a carer of a shielded patient, is eligible for the flu vaccination from September onwards and should contact the GP practice they are registered with or their pharmacy to book an appointment.

Flu is a highly infectious disease that is spread from person to person and infects the respiratory system, where it can lead to pneumonia and other complications. The flu viruses are constantly changing and this is one of the main reasons why people should be vaccinated annually. The symptoms, that come on very quickly, include fever, chills, headaches, aches and pains in the joints and muscles, and extreme

tiredness. The best way to avoid getting the flu is by having the vaccination. Doing so reduces the risk of developing the illness significantly.

For a full list of priority groups and other information about this year's flu vaccine, visit www.nhs.uk and search for flu vaccine.

Information on the free flu vaccine is available in [Easyread](#) formats and in a [variety of languages](#).