

Caring for Care Homes flu special

Issue 26, October 2018

Newsletter for Care Home staff, General Practitioners and Community Pharmacists

Flu is a serious illness for residents and staff

Please ensure you have made arrangements for all your residents to be vaccinated

Flu can be serious, particularly for older people or those with other health conditions. Care workers are looking after some of the most vulnerable people in our communities, so it is important that they help protect themselves and those receiving care and support against flu. Flu spreads easily and can be passed from staff to residents even when the staff member has mild or no symptoms.



During 2017/18, in the South West, most cases of flu were seen mainly in those aged 65 years and over. This was consistent with outbreaks seen in care homes. There were 307 outbreaks of flu, of which 89% were in care homes. For Devon specifically, there were 46 suspected outbreaks due to flu in care homes, 16 of these occurred in Torbay and 5 in Plymouth (week 27, 2017 to week 22, 2018).

We have seen how flu outbreaks can cause major disruption to health and social care services in the winter months. It is important to encourage social care staff to take up the offer of immunisation each year to protect themselves, their families and the vulnerable people they care for. Having the flu vaccine provides direct protection to the individual staff member and also makes it less likely that they will spread flu to residents.

Flu can be fatal - please ask staff to view this short video featuring a local Health Care Assistant: www.youtube.com/watch?v=15pieb-313o

Free vaccination for frontline health and social care staff

Last year, NHS England provided additional funding to support the delivery of flu immunisation for health and social care workers that offer direct patient or client care. It has recently been announced that this will continue for 2018/19 and be extended to health and care staff in the voluntary managed hospice sector who also offer direct patient care. A letter released by NHS England explains that the vaccination will be available free again this year for staff working in health social care.

The following staff will be eligible for this offer:

- Health and social care staff, employed by a registered residential care/nursing home or registered domiciliary care provider, who are directly involved in the care of vulnerable patients/clients who are at increased risk from exposure to influenza. Vulnerable means those patients/clients in a clinical risk group for flu or who are aged 65 years and over.
- Health and care staff, employed by a voluntary managed hospice provider, who are directly involved in the care of vulnerable patients/clients who are at increased risk from exposure to influenza. Vulnerable means those patients/clients in a clinical risk group for flu or who are aged 65 years and over.



Staff falling into these categories will be able to have the vaccine for free at their GP or participating community pharmacy. They should ideally take with them identification that includes their name and the name of their employing organisation. This could be an ID badge, a letter from their employer or a recent pay slip.

As with every flu season, staff who already fall into one of the NHS 'at risk groups' will be able to have free flu vaccination at their GP practice or a community pharmacy. Their reason for receiving a flu vaccination should be recorded as 'at risk' status. NHS Choices provides more information about who is eligible: www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/flu-influenza-vaccine/

Flu prophylaxis if an outbreak is confirmed in care home

If there is an outbreak of flu in a care home the residents may be issued with prophylactic anti-viral medication. This service may be provided by a healthcare professional other than the resident's own GP, therefore please help by ensuring an up to date list of residents is available. It is helpful to note details including names of residents, dates of birth, significant medical conditions and GP practice. If known, the Kidney Function with date of last blood test can be recorded, however please **don't request this information from GP if you don't already have this**. If kidney function is not known, it will be estimated from the resident's date of birth. A sample template is attached.

Useful resources to support you this winter

- Public Health England's Winter Readiness Pack (www.england.nhs.uk/south/info-professional/public-health/infection-winter/) provides lots of useful information, including:
 - A toolkit for maximising influenza vaccination in care homes, including common myths and a cost calculator
 - A template for recording staff flu vaccination
 - Checklists for flu and norovirus preparedness in care homes
 - The Public Health England, South West Health protection team 'Care Home Pack', a guide to Infection Prevention and Control (IPC), common infectious diseases and recognition and management of outbreaks
 - National guidance for care homes on IPC
 - National guidance on managing norovirus in care homes
 - Information leaflet on flu for health and social care staff
 - Outbreaks of flu in care homes poster
 - Stop Norovirus Spreading poster
 - Hand hygiene poster
- NHS Employers' **flu fighter care** campaign also provides support and resources to help social care organisations in running their flu campaigns. Their webpages contain helpful resources, including updated **posters and a pay slip** leaflet for 2018/19 season, and a **flu fighter guide for social care**.
- The Public Health England 'Stay Well This Winter' campaign has a range of resources to download: <https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources/campaigns/34-stay-well-this-winter->
- For general information about flu - www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Flu/Pages/Introduction.aspx
- The GP Toolkit/Resource Pack contains information about promoting vaccine uptake, inviting patients, reporting uptake, and more is available on www.england.nhs.uk/south/info-professional/public-health/immunisations/influenza/gp-pack/.
- Facts on adjuvanted trivalent inactivated influenza vaccine, the South West annual flu plan 2018-19, the South West annual flu report 2017-18 and a Care Home Flu Toolkit are available on www.england.nhs.uk/south/info-professional/public-health/immunisations/influenza/

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Thank you to Public Health, Plymouth, Devon and Torbay

