**NEWS RELEASE**

**12.01.2018**

**Still time to get your flu jab**

Fylde coast residents yet to have had their flu jab are being encouraged to do their bit to help the NHS by protecting themselves against the easily avoidable illness.

With the post-festive period always a busy time for the NHS and the flu virus still lurking, if you have not yet taken up the offer of a free jab you could have a greater impact on NHS resources this winter should you fall ill as a result of the flu.

If you have been invited by your GP to have a free flu jab it is important that you take up this opportunity. Anyone who is offered a free flu jab from the NHS is classed as belonging to an ‘at risk’ group of patients. This means that if you do get the flu it is more likely to lead to serious health complications or in some cases even death.

There are also those who do not fall into the ‘at risk’ groups but also need to have their flu jab every year. They are either frontline health and social care professionals or those who care for people with a long term illness or have weakened immune systems due to an existing condition such as cancer. Again it is important that you too get protected.

Even if you generally feel healthy it is important that, if your GP has invited you for a free flu jab, you book an appointment or speak to your local GP practice to find out when they are running flu jab clinics.

You can still get the flu jab even if you don’t fall into one of the at risk groups. If you would like to protect yourself and your loved ones but are not eligible for a free flu jab you can pay for one at your local pharmacy or GP practice. Your employers may also have a scheme in place to protect their employees - speak to your own HR department to find out if your workplace is offering this to staff.

Speaking on behalf of the Fylde coast NHS, Tony Naughton, who is a GP in Thornton said: “Flu isn’t just a bad cold. It’s a serious illness that can have dangerous and deadly consequences if you have an existing health condition like COPD, diabetes, heart disease and other long-term ailments.

“So if you have been invited to get your free vaccine but still not had it then it’s important that you get it soon. Why run the risk of illness which could be prevented by a simple vaccine?

“If you are eligible for a free flu vaccine then it’s because you need it.”

Pregnant women, children aged 2 and 3 as well as school children from reception class through to year 4 are also eligible for the free flu vaccine. For eligible children, the flu vaccine is not an injection, just a quick nasal spray.

Flu can be horrible for little children, and if they get it, they can spread it around the whole family. Children who get the flu have the same symptoms as adults – including fever, chills, aching muscles, headache, stuffy nose, dry cough and sore throat. Some children develop a very high fever or complications of flu, such as bronchitis or pneumonia and may need hospital treatment. The flu vaccine can help protect your child from flu and also reduce the chance of flu spreading to others.

If you have a child aged 2 or 3, get them vaccinated against flu with the free nasal spray flu vaccine from your GP. School children from reception class through to year 4 will get their vaccinations through their school.

Dr Naughton added: “If you haven’t already had your child vaccinated against flu then we would really recommend that you make arrangements to as soon as possible. Particularly in younger children up to year four school age, flu can be very nasty and lead to serious complications. It also helps to stop the virus being passed around your family and friends too as flu is highly contagious and easily spread by infected children.”

If you have received an invitation for your free flu vaccine then please contact your GP practice as soon as possible to arrange your appointment.

If you are not eligible for a free vaccine but would still like to protect yourself and your loved ones then please visit your local pharmacy, many of which offer walk-in appointments.

Pregnant women should speak to their midwife.

Visit [www.nhs.uk/staywell](http://www.nhs.uk/staywell) for more information.

**Notes to editors:**

* [Bust those flu myths](http://blackpoolccg.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Bust-those-flu-myths.pdf)
* Fascinating [flu facts](http://blackpoolccg.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/flu-facts.pdf)(for example, did you know a sneeze travels at between 80-100mph?)

**Who can get a free flu jab?**

* everyone aged 65 and over;
* everyone aged 18-65 years of age who has a medical condition, including children and babies over six months of age, such as:
	+ diabetes
	+ heart disease
	+ lung disease such as bronchitis
	+ emphysema or severe asthma
	+ kidney disease
	+ a neurological disease such as multiple sclerosis (MS)or cerebral palsy
* all pregnant women, at any stage of pregnancy
* a healthy child aged 2, 3 or 4 years (given in the form of a nasal spray)
* a child or young person aged 2-18 years with a long term health condition (given in the form of a nasal spray)
* everyone living in a residential or nursing home
* everyone who cares for an older or disabled person
* household contacts of anyone who is immunocompromised
* all frontline health and social care workers

**\****Summary of those who are recommended to have the flu vaccine (source: Public Health England)*

This press release is issued jointly by NHS Blackpool Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), NHS Fylde and Wyre CCG and Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

For further information about this press release please call the communications team on 01253 951349.