

Influenza clinics

Our flu vaccines have arrived and if you qualify for a flu jab. We will be operating two Saturday morning FLU DROP-IN CLINICS on 1st & 8th October and throughout October and November. Appointments are now being taken.

To qualify for a flu jab you must be over 65 by end of March 2012 or suffer from a least one of following conditions:

Diabetes

Respiratory disease

- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Bronchitis
- Emphysema
- Cystic fibrosis
- Bronchiectasis
- Asthma

Heart disease

- Angina
- Heart failure
- Previous splenic attack

Kidney disease

- Chronic renal failure
- Undergoing dialysis
- Previous kidney transplant

Liver disease

- Cirrhosis
- Biliary Atresia
- Chronic hepatitis

History of:

- Stroke
- Transient ischaemic attack (TIA)

Weak immune system

- No spleen or splenic dysfunction
- HIV
- Cancer
- Radiotherapy
- Chemotherapy
- People taking high-dose steroids

Pregnant

Carer

You may also qualify for an influenza vaccination if you work with or care for others (elderly or disabled) whose welfare maybe at risk if you fall ill, you should be vaccinated so you can continue to care for them.

This is generally restricted to:

- Health and social care staff, directly involved with patient care
- People who care for a vulnerable relative

Flu Myths

Myth 1: *Flu vaccine might give you the flu*

Flu vaccine does not contain live virus and cannot cause flu.

As the vaccine takes 10 to 14 days to produce antibodies, it is possible to catch flu before the vaccine starts to work. There are also other conditions that can cause symptoms similar to flu, that the vaccine will not prevent.

Myth 2: *Over 65's don't need a flu vaccine if they are fit and well*

Regardless of how well you feel, it is very important to be vaccinated annually because your immune system is less able to defend against infections as you get older.

Myth 3

Flu vaccination makes you feel terrible

Flu vaccination should not make you feel unwell. There may be temporary soreness at the site of injection. Rarely, it can cause fever and muscle aches lasting up to two days

Myth 4

Vaccination guarantees I won't get flu

Flu vaccines are highly effective in preventing flu, but no vaccine can offer total protection. The Department of Health says that immunisation is one of the most effective healthcare interventions, and flu vaccines are highly effective in preventing illness and reducing hospital admissions and deaths from flu.

Why is it best to avoid flu?

Older people may not be able to fight off infection and are more likely to suffer from the complications of flu, like life-threatening pneumonia.

For people with respiratory disease flu can attack the airways leading to constriction or coughing. This can make one's condition worse, damage the lungs or even cause pneumonia.

For those with heart disease flu can put extra strain on your heart. This can lead to breathing difficulties or damage the muscles of the heart.

In people with kidney disease effects of flu include dehydration (water loss) which can damage your kidneys further. You are also at risk of pneumonia, severe illness and hospitalisation.

If you suffer from liver problems your body may be less able to cope with the symptoms of flu such as dehydration, fever and fatigue. You are also at risk of pneumonia, severe illness and hospitalisation.

For people with diabetes the complications of flu can make it more difficult to control blood glucose levels. You are also at increased risk of pneumonia.

People with a history of stroke and those with underlying neurological diseases like multiple sclerosis are at risk of exacerbating the underlying disease as a result of influenza infection. You are also at risk of serious illness from influenza itself.

In a people with a weak immune system are prone to flu as their body is not able to defend itself properly. You are especially at risk of pneumonia.

Pneumococcal

You may also be eligible for a pneumonia vaccine. Please ask the immuniser when you have your flu jab if you need the pneumococcal vaccine as well. It is perfectly safe to have both vaccines on the same day.

How serious is pneumonia?

If you were previously well, with treatment, you are likely to make a full recovery. However, some bacteria, viruses, and other germs are more serious than others. Some people become very ill and require hospital admission. Occasionally, some people who were previously well die from pneumonia.

If you are already in poor health, you are more likely to become seriously ill with pneumonia. Pneumonia is a common cause of death in people who are already in poor health, for example, people in the late or terminal stages of a cancer.