

## Reproduced with permission from NHS England:-

### Key Messages for Patients

#### Reminders from 'Why am I being asked to wait?' leaflet:

##### **○ I am in one of the listed groups. Why am I being asked to wait to have my flu vaccine?**

Overall there is no shortage of flu vaccine with enough ordered to vaccinate 30 million people. However, it is usual for manufacturers to stagger deliveries of vaccine so you may have to wait to receive your vaccination.

When the first deliveries arrive in late September, vaccinations begin to be offered and these continue throughout the autumn, usually through to December. This season, early demand for flu vaccine has been higher than usual due to concerns about the coronavirus pandemic. GP surgeries have to order their vaccination a year before the flu campaign – so vaccines received in Autumn 2020, were in fact ordered in October 2019! This means that some GP practices and pharmacies will have to ask people to wait until they receive further deliveries.

##### **➤ Can I go elsewhere if my GP practice or pharmacy has run out?**

If you are eligible for the free flu vaccine, you may get it either from your GP practice or a pharmacy offering NHS flu vaccinations. This means that if one of them does not currently have stock in, you can try elsewhere. They should also be able to tell you when they expect their next deliveries.

Pregnant women can ask their maternity provider for the free flu vaccine and some of those visiting hospitals, either as in- or out-patients may also be offered the flu vaccine there.

##### **○ Why are some people still being offered the vaccine and not others?**

There are several types of flu vaccines available. You will be offered one that is recommended for you based on your age. This means some people will be offered a flu vaccine that is in stock while others, who need a different type of vaccine, may have to wait.

##### **➤ Wouldn't it be better to have any type of flu vaccine rather than wait?**

Providers of flu vaccination services are required to offer the vaccine that is most effective for you. It is better to wait to get the right vaccine so that you get the most benefit from it.

##### **➤ When do you need to have a flu vaccination for it to offer protection?**

It is best to have the vaccine before flu starts to circulate, which is usually from December onwards. But if it is later in the year than this, it is still worth having.

The priority this season is to vaccinate those who are most at risk from flu first, including anyone aged 50 to 64 years old who has a health condition that makes them more at risk from flu. Other healthy 50 to 64 year olds will be offered the vaccine later in the season when additional supply becomes available.

### ➤ **What should I do now?**

If you can't have your flu vaccine now, you will receive a letter notifying you when you can book an appointment at your GP surgery or pharmacy. Or you can stay in touch with them and book one at the next opportunity.

### **Flu and Covid: FAQs and Key Messages**

Getting the flu vaccine is more important than ever this year, as people at high risk from COVID-19 are also those most at risk from flu.

### ➤ **Should a patient feeling unwell have a vaccination?**

Vaccination may be postponed in those who are acutely unwell until they have fully recovered. This is to avoid confusing the differential diagnosis of any acute illness by wrongly attributing any signs or symptoms to the adverse effects of the vaccine.

### ○ **Should a patient who is self-isolating attend for a vaccination?**

Those displaying symptoms of COVID-19, other infections, or who are self-isolating because they are contacts of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases, should not attend.

Patients eligible to receive NHS-funded flu vaccine but recently in contact with or diagnosed with COVID-19 infection can be vaccinated when recovered and self-isolation requirements have been fulfilled.

### ○ **What should I do about a fever following a flu vaccination?**

Vaccinated individuals, parents and carers should be advised that flu vaccines may cause a mild fever which usually resolves within 48 hours. This is a common, expected reaction and **isolation is not required unless COVID-19 is suspected**. Feeling generally unwell, shivery, achy and tired are also commonly reported symptoms following flu vaccination. These symptoms usually disappear within one to two days without treatment, but paracetamol can be given if necessary to relieve any of these symptoms. As has always been recommended, any fever after vaccination should be monitored and if individuals, parents or carers are concerned about their, or their child's health at any time, they should seek advice from their GP or NHS 111.

### ➤ **Will the flu vaccine make you test positive for coronavirus?**

The flu vaccine will not interfere with testing for COVID-19.

The test for COVID-19 looks for the specific genetic sequence of the SARS-CoV-2 virus which causes COVID-19 disease.

Flu viruses have a very different genetic sequence from the SARS-CoV-2 virus so having the flu vaccine cannot affect the result of the COVID-19 virus test.