

Seasonal Flu Jabs

Seasonal flu vaccinations are now available at the practice for at risk patients or those aged 65 or over. Please contact the Practice on **01273 411229** to arrange an appointment.

Seasonal flu is a highly infectious respiratory illness caused by a flu virus. It spreads rapidly through the coughs and sneezes of infected people.

Seasonal flu immunisation, or the flu jab, is the injection of a vaccine against flu. It gives good protection from flu that lasts for one year.

The flu vaccination is offered to people in at-risk groups, who are at greater risk of developing serious complications from flu. To stay protected, they need to have it every year.

The vaccine, which is normally available in the autumn, is made from the strains of flu that are expected in winter.

How the vaccine protects you

About a week to 10 days after you have had the flu injection, your body starts making antibodies to the virus in the vaccine.

Antibodies are proteins that recognise and fight off germs that have invaded your blood, such as viruses. They help protect you against any similar viruses you then come into contact with.

The flu virus changes every year, so you need to have a flu vaccination annually to make sure that you are protected against the latest strain of the virus.

How effective is it?

The flu vaccines currently available give 70-80% protection against infection, with flu virus strains closely matching those in the vaccine.

In the elderly, protection against infection may be less, but immunisation reduces the chances of pneumonia, hospital admissions and death from seasonal flu.

For most people, seasonal flu is unpleasant but not serious and they recover within a week.

However, certain people are at greater risk of developing serious complications of flu, such as bronchitis and pneumonia. These may require hospital treatment. A large number of elderly people die from flu every winter.

The seasonal flu vaccine is offered free of charge to these at-risk groups to protect them from catching flu and developing these complications.

At-risk groups

It is recommended you have a flu vaccination if you:

- are 65 or over
- have a serious medical condition such as chronic chest problems, chronic heart, liver or kidney disease

- are immuno-suppressed
- are diabetic
- are pregnant
- live in a residential or nursing home
- are the main carer for an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if you fall ill
- are a healthcare or social care professional directly involved in patient care, or

If you are the parent of a child (over six months) with a long-term condition, speak to your GP about the flu jab. Your child's condition may get worse if they catch flu.

If you are the carer of an elderly or disabled person, make sure they have had their flu vaccination.