

## **Free flu vaccinations for care workers**

### **Frequently asked questions**

#### **What is flu?**

Flu is an illness caused by influenza virus. People tend to describe colds as flu; this is because some symptoms are common for both. The symptoms of flu tend to come on suddenly and are different and more severe than colds. They will include a high fever, a shivery feeling, headaches, aching body and extreme tiredness.

#### **Can I get a free flu jab?**

From Wednesday 15 November everyone employed in direct care in Oxfordshire is eligible for a FREE flu vaccination.

You simply need to go to your local pharmacy or GP Practice and ask for a free flu jab. Remember to show your ID badge as proof of employment.

Free flu vaccinations for direct care workers are being offered as part of the national flu vaccination programme.

#### **Why should I have a flu jab?**

Flu can be an unpleasant disease for healthy people, but for the vulnerable people you care for it can be fatal. Many people with flu show no symptoms, meaning social care workers who feel fit and healthy can unwittingly infect the people they care for.

Getting your flu jab will help to protect you, the people you care for and will help to flu related staff illness.

#### **What is involved?**

Getting a flu jab is a simple procedure that only takes a couple of minutes. You will need to sign the standard NHS consent form to say you agree to being immunised.

#### **How effective is the flu jab?**

No vaccine is 100% effective; however, people who have had the flu jab are less likely to get flu. If you do get flu despite having the jab, it will probably be milder than if you haven't been vaccinated.

### **How long will I be protected for?**

The vaccine should provide protection throughout the 2017/18 flu season. Because the flu virus can change from year to year there is always a risk that the vaccine does not match the circulating virus.

### **Does the flu jab have side effects?**

The flu jab doesn't cause flu as it doesn't contain live viruses. However, you may experience side effects after having the jab, such as a temperature and aching muscles for a couple of days afterwards. Your arm may feel sore at the site where you were injected. More severe reactions are rare. The flu vaccine only protects against flu, not other illnesses caused by other viruses, such as the common cold.

### **Who shouldn't have the flu jab?**

You shouldn't have the flu vaccination if:

- you've had a serious reaction to a flu vaccination before
- you have a high temperature (postpone it until you're better)

### **I think I've already had flu, do I need a vaccination?**

Yes. Other viruses can give you flulike symptoms, or you may have had flu but because there is more than one type of flu virus you should still have the vaccine even if you think you've had flu.

### **More information**

If you have further questions about the flu jab, visit [www.nhs.uk/staywell](http://www.nhs.uk/staywell) or ask your pharmacist.