

Changes to flu vaccination programme across Grampian as Winter 2020 campaign gets underway

The way the flu vaccination is delivered in Grampian is set for significant change this year, as the location for immunisation shifts from GP practices to dedicated clinics.

In 2017, the Scottish Government and the Scottish General Practitioners Committee (SGPC) agreed vaccinations would move away from a model based on GP delivery to one based on NHS Board delivery through dedicated teams.

Dr Simon Hilton, Immunisation Co-ordinator for NHS Grampian said: "The biggest change will be that individuals who previously got their free flu vaccination from their GP will now be invited to attend a local vaccination clinic instead.

This also comes at a time where we anticipate the number of flu vaccinations to increase significantly, with additional groups being offered immunisation due to COVID-19.

Clinics will be set up in a number of locations across Grampian within secondary schools and community spaces such as sports halls, churches and any other large venues that can allow for social distancing. Measures will be put in place to ensure health and safety is priority."

The following groups will be offered the flu vaccine, free of charge:

- Children aged 2-5
- School children in Primary 1-7
- Pregnant women
- Health Care workers
- Social care workers who provide direct care
- Unpaid carers
- 55-64 year olds
- Those over 65
- Anyone with an underlying medical condition such as asthma, COPD or diabetes
- Anyone who lives with someone who is in the shielding category

Dr Hilton added: "We always give very strong encouragement to people in those groups to come forward and get their flu vaccine. We are now living with a global pandemic, making it even more important that people in the at-risk groups are immunised. Flu adapts and changes constantly. It is not just a bad cold; it is a virus which can make people seriously ill and, unfortunately, claims lives every winter."

Practical arrangements for delivering the vaccine are as follows:

- Pregnant women will be advised by their community midwife;
- Children aged 2-5, those over 65, and anyone with an underlying medical condition will be invited to attend a local clinic at a set date and time. That invitation will come to your home address;
- School children in Primary 1-7; parents will be sent information and a consent form, and children will be vaccinated at school;
- Health & social care staff will be advised by their employers;
- If you are aged 55 - 64, you will receive an appointment letter in December.

If you are an unpaid carer, or you live with someone who was advised to shield as a result of COVID-19, and you wouldn't normally get the flu jab, then you can contact the NHS Grampian flu helpline to arrange an appointment.

If you're aged 16 years or older, and not in one of the eligible groups, you can get the vaccine in many high street pharmacies for a small fee.

To find if you are eligible or how to get your flu vaccine visit www.NHSinform.scot or call NHS Grampian Flu Call Centre 01224 555999.