

Flu vaccine uptake among people aged 65+ on track to be highest on record

From 1 December, 50 to 64 years olds will also be eligible for a free vaccine.

Uptake is also the highest it has ever been in 2 and 3 year olds, at 47.6% and 49.4%, [data published by Public Health England](#) shows.

As part of this year's expanded NHS flu vaccination programme, children in Year 7 have been offered the vaccine for the first time this year. Uptake in this year is higher than all other school groups, with more than a quarter (158,748) of Year 7 children vaccinated by the end of October.

As well as protecting them from flu, vaccinating children – who are known to be 'super spreaders' of the flu – also prevents them from passing the virus on to family members and others at greater risk of serious complications and death.

Uptake in healthcare workers is also ahead of this time last year. By the end of October, more than half (51.6%) of healthcare workers had already been vaccinated – over 100,000 more compared to the same period last year.

England achieves some of the highest flu vaccine uptake rates in Europe for healthcare workers. Vaccination protects frontline staff – who are more likely to be exposed to flu at work – while also providing indirect protection to vulnerable patients.

This is a promising start to the season, and anyone who is eligible but has not yet been vaccinated is encouraged to take up the offer before flu starts circulating in the community – especially for pregnant women and those with long-term health conditions, where uptake is currently 32.2% and 41.2%.

Dr Vanessa Saliba, Head of Flu at Public Health England, said:

We have had an incredible start to the flu vaccination programme, with record uptake in 2 to 3 year olds and rates in over 65s – the highest since the 2005 to 2006 season. With over 30 million doses available this season, more people than ever are being offered a free flu vaccine.

There is still time to get vaccinated against flu before it starts circulating in the community. We are urging anyone who is eligible to take up the offer. By getting the jab, you can help protect yourself, your family and the NHS – it will help save lives.

The vaccine is the best defence against flu and it is more important than ever this year as COVID-19 will be circulating during the flu season.

Flu can develop into a serious illness that requires hospitalisation, adding pressure on the NHS and social care when they will also be dealing with cases of COVID-19.

Background information

Flu activity, including GP consultations and hospital admissions, remains low.

Flu vaccine uptake is higher in all groups except pregnant women compared to this time last year. Provisional data suggests uptake rates are:

- 75.0% in 65+ year olds
- 41.2% in under 65 years in a clinical risk group
- 32.2% in pregnant women
- 47.6% in 2 year olds
- 49.4% in 3 year olds
- 19.8% in school age children
- 51.6% in healthcare workers