

Free flu vaccinations rolled out to over 50s from December

- Individuals will be able to get free flu jab from their GP or pharmacist
- Centrally secured supply of vaccines available to GPs and pharmacies for newly eligible group

Adults over the age of 50 will be able to get their free flu vaccine from 1 December in the next phase of this year's expanded flu vaccination programme, the government has confirmed.

Individuals aged 50 to 64 will be able to get a vaccine from their GP or pharmacy. This significant new group can now be included in the flu programme, with the initial phase of flu vaccinations well under way.

Flu vaccine uptake is higher in all vulnerable groups except pregnant women compared with this time last year. Provisional data published by Public Health England on Thursday 20 November suggests 72.9% of those aged 65 and over, 45.0% of 2 year olds and 46.8% of 3 year olds have had their vaccine.

GPs, trusts and pharmacists can order additional stock to vaccinate this new group from the centrally secured government supply of over 7 million vaccines.

This has been secured amid high global demand for more flu vaccine and now means vaccines can be provided to this group over December and into the New Year. There is enough flu vaccine supply to vaccinate 30 million people throughout this year's flu season in England.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Matt Hancock said:

This winter is like no other, and we have to worry about the twin threats of flu and COVID-19.

COVID means getting a flu jab is more important than ever this year. So we are delivering the largest ever flu vaccination programme. Free vaccinations for 50 to 64 years olds will now be available from GPs and pharmacies starting from 1 December.

Public Health Minister Jo Churchill said:

To prepare for this challenging winter, we committed to protect as many people as possible from the flu, to keep those at risk safe and reduce the strain on our NHS. I am pleased we are now able to deliver on that commitment with those aged 50 to 64 invited to get their free flu vaccine from the start of December.

These vaccinations are already being given to our existing priority

groups and that vital work will continue. More vaccine is flowing into GPs and pharmacies throughout the next few months, and I would urge anyone eligible for their flu vaccine to get one, including all health and social care workers.

The extended offer comes as part of the most comprehensive flu vaccination programme in the UK's history this winter, alongside plans to support the NHS as it continues to respond to coronavirus, and to relieve winter pressures on A&E and emergency care.

Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England Professor Jonathan Van-Tam said:

Influenza vaccination is a critical tool this and every winter to prevent severe illnesses and potential hospitalisations for thousands of people.

I urge all those who are eligible for the flu vaccine, including the new group of 50 to 64 year olds, to book their appointments as soon as they can.

The roll-out of the flu vaccine to over 50s is separate to any future COVID-19 vaccine roll-out and people will be able to receive the flu and COVID-19 vaccinations in parallel. The NHS is well equipped to administer both.

Further details on the COVID-19 vaccination deployment plan will follow.

The flu vaccine will be offered to 30 million people in England this year, our largest ever flu vaccination programme. The groups now eligible are:

- adults aged 65 or over
- pregnant women
- those with certain pre-existing conditions
- NHS and social care workers
- all children up to year 7
- household contacts of those who are clinically extremely vulnerable
- adults aged 50 to 64