

News story: Chief medical officer advises NHS staff to make sure they are vaccinated against flu

The Chief Medical Officer is among a group of leading doctors and nurses who have written to NHS staff urging them to get vaccinated as soon as possible to help reduce the spread of flu.

The letter reminds healthcare workers of the key role they play 'in protecting the health of the public'. It states their 'shared professional responsibility' to protect patients.

It is signed by Professor Dame Sally Davies (England's Chief Medical Officer), Professor Sir Bruce Keogh (NHSE Medical Director), Professor Paul Cosford (PHE Medical Director) and Professor Jane Cummings (NHSE Chief Nursing Officer).

Across the NHS, 59% of staff have had the vaccine but in some Trusts less than 3 in 10 staff are protected.

Statistics last week showed:

- an 86% increase in people newly admitted to intensive care (ICU) with confirmed influenza from the previous week (114 compared to 61 the week before)
- 114 people were admitted to ICU with flu, compared to 78 cases of at this time last year, and 35 in 2015/16.
- a 3-fold increase in the rate of people admitted to hospital with confirmed flu since the previous week (6.8 per 100,000 compared to 2.33 per 100,000 before)

Professor Dame Sally Davies, Chief Medical Officer said:

Flu can kill and it is important we all take it seriously.

The best way to protect yourself and those around you is to get the flu jab. If you are suffering from flu-like symptoms you should catch your coughs or sneezes in tissues, bin the tissue immediately, and wash your hands regularly with soap and warm water.

Professor Sir Bruce Keogh, NHS England Medical Director said:

The recent flu figures are a reminder that NHS staff should protect themselves, patients and their loved ones by getting vaccinated. We

should have a measured debate about making this the norm for doctors, nurses and other frontline NHS staff before next winter.