

Record level of flu jab uptake in those aged 65 and over

More people aged 65 and over have received their flu vaccine this year than ever before.

Uptake in pregnant women, those with underlying health conditions, and preschoolers remains behind uptake in older adults.

Of people aged 65 and over, 81.4% have already come forward for their flu vaccination this season, according to the latest data from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA). This is the highest uptake in this age group on record, above the end of season uptake of 80.9% last year.

Thanks to those eligible for the vaccine coming forward, it means that England has already exceeded the World Health Organization (WHO) target of 75% in this age group for this winter season.

However, uptake in pregnant women and those with underlying health conditions remains low in comparison to older adults (37.1% for pregnant women and 49.2% for those under 65 with underlying health conditions), and preschool vaccination rates are less than last year's record uptake during the same period (49.0% of 3-year olds and 46.6% in all 2-year olds). Uptake recorded in healthcare workers is also lower than at this point in previous years.

Dr Conall Watson, Consultant Epidemiologist at UKHSA, said:

Flu can cause serious illness and be fatal. Flu vaccines save lives. That's why it is so good to see that a record number of people aged 65 years old and over are now vaccinated against flu.

But there are still many people in younger eligible groups – pregnant women and people with underlying medical conditions – who have not yet been vaccinated against flu this winter and are at risk of serious complications from flu infection.

If you are eligible, please book your flu vaccine as soon as possible to help protect yourself and family this winter.

Dr Nikki Kanani, GP and medical director of primary care for NHS England, said:

This is testament to the hard work of health professionals across the country in rolling out the biggest free flu drive in healthcare history, in addition to delivering an incredible coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination programme.

With more people than ever eligible for a free flu vaccine, it is fantastic to see such strong uptake of the flu vaccine so far, with millions of people having already received their dose of protection and I urge anyone who is eligible – including pregnant women, those with underlying health conditions, everyone aged 50 and above and frontline health and care workers – to come forward and book their vaccine as soon as possible.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

It is incredible that more people aged 65 and over have received their flu vaccine this year than ever before. Getting your winter vaccines – whether that is your flu jab if eligible or your booster jab – is one of the most important things people can do this winter.

Record numbers of people took up the offer of a free flu vaccine last year and the programme is expanding even further this year, with a record 35 million people in England eligible.

Don't delay – all those eligible should book their winter vaccines as soon as possible.

Flu is a highly infectious disease and can lead to serious complications for those living with a long-term health condition, including respiratory and heart conditions, diabetes, kidney disease, liver disease or a chronic neurological disease like multiple sclerosis or cerebral palsy.

People with underlying health conditions overall are around 11 times more likely to die if they catch flu compared to healthy adults.

Pregnant women are also at increased risk of serious complications and should have the flu vaccine to help protect themselves and their babies. UKHSA and NHSEI urge these people to come forward for the flu vaccine as soon as possible before a potential rise in flu cases this year.

You can get your flu jab from your own GP practice or free from any pharmacy offering NHS flu vaccinations.

Pregnant women can ask their maternity provider for the free flu vaccine and some of those visiting hospitals – either as inpatients or outpatients – may also be offered the flu vaccine there.

School aged children will be invited for [a flu vaccination](#) via their local vaccination service.

Preschoolers (aged 2 or 3 on 31 August 2021) are offered nasal flu vaccination through their GP practice.

You are eligible for a free flu vaccination if you are:

- aged 50 years old and over (including those aged 50 by 31 March 2022)
- have certain health conditions
- live with someone who is immunocompromised
- are pregnant
- receive a carer's allowance or are the main carer of an older or disabled person who may be at risk if you get sick

Children aged 2 and 3 years old on the 31 August 2021 and school-aged child from Reception up to Year 11 are also eligible for the flu vaccine.

Frontline health and social care workers should be offered a flu vaccine through their employer either in their workplace or another local service. They can also have an NHS flu vaccine at a GP surgery or a pharmacy if:

- they are a health or social care worker employed by a registered residential care or nursing home, registered homecare organisation or a hospice
- they work in NHS primary care (such as in a GP surgery, pharmacy, dental surgery or opticians) and have direct contact with patients – this includes contractors, non-clinical staff and locums
- they provide health or social care through [direct payments](#) or personal health budgets, or both