

Healthwatch Enfield in partnership with Age UK Enfield, Enfield Health Directorate of North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Public Health Enfield and local GPs - Flu Jab discussion

Online Question and Answer session

16th September 2020

Presenters:

- **Dudzile Sher Arami** - Consultant for Public Health, Enfield Council
- **Dr. Hetul Shah** - Enfield based GP and lead for Integrated Care for Enfield Health Directorate of North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
- **Riyad Karim** - Interim Head of Primary care for Enfield Health Directorate of North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
- **Alison Gordon** - Head of Prevention Services for Age UK Enfield
- **Peter Lathlean** - Deputy Head of Primary Care Commissioning for Enfield Health Directorate of North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
- **Vee Scott** - Head of Community Engagement for Enfield Health Directorate of North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

Q1 - Will schools be able to offer the flu jab? As well as the nasal spray? Does primary school include reception? When will jabs start to be available?

A - GP - No, the jab will only be offered to children who have an immune deficiency. Please click on the link below for further information about the flu vaccine for children.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/child-flu-vaccine/>

A - PH Enfield - The injections will only be offered to children who have a clinical risk to the nasal spray. Public Health England want to expand this to those that have a cultural objection to nasal spray. The nasal spray is the most effective way to protect children from flu. Primary school children and Year 7s will be offered immunisation at school. Reception children will also be offered. The schools programme will be starting over the next few weeks.

For adults, the flu jab will hopefully be available by the end of September. Please wait to hear from your GP. Please click on the link below for further information about who's eligible for the flu vaccine.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/flu-influenza-vaccine/>

Q2 - My son got bad flu after he had the vaccine last year. Could this happen again - what are the side effects?

A - GP - The flu jab given is a weakened form of flu, to create an immune response to activate antibodies. It works at a colder temperature, so a healthy child can't contract flu from the vaccine unless you are immune suppressant.

A - PH Enfield - The flu jab is given during flu season. People can still transmit cold viruses before or after getting the flu vaccine.

Q3 - For people who were shielding or have mobility issues, how would they get their flu jab? As going to the surgery could put them at risk of getting Covid -19?

A -GP - According to current guidelines, shielded patients can visit the surgery for the flu jab. For those that are housebound your GP surgery should be getting in touch to organise this for you. GP's are prioritising vulnerable groups first, as there are limited number of jabs available. GP practices are all ensuring their surgeries are safe and will ensure the way they give the vaccines will also be safe.

Q4 - Will walk in sessions be available in public open spaces such as parks, playgrounds, and car parks for the flu jab?

A - GP- Some practice are being creative and finding ways to offer the flu jab to ensure sites are COVID-secure, for example my practice will be offering the jab in our car park but also drive-through flu jabs in nearby car park. GP practices should be contacting patients once they have delivery of their flu stocks from the manufacturers. Have patience and make sure your contact information is up to date at your surgery. You can also check the GP surgery website for further information.

Q5 - Will the flu jab protect against the coronavirus as well or not?

A - GP- No, the flu jab will not protect against COVID19. However, if less people get the flu, this will help those patients keep strong and will also help the NHS. Also protection from flu will ensure your body is stronger if you were to also be exposed to COVID19.

Q6 - When will the flu jab be available for over 65s in Enfield?

A - GP - Hopefully, once jabs have been delivered to practices. Check the practice website for up to date information.

Q7 - Due to the Covid outbreak, what types of different measurements will be provided by surgeries to give flu jabs to patients with learning disabilities?

A - GP: Patients with learning disabilities who are still able to attend surgery can have the flu jab on site. It's important they let the receptionist know if the patient has additional needs, so they can provide further assistance or provision as required based on the needs of the patient. Patients with a severe disability will be seen in a similar way to those patients that are housebound. It's also important for carers to register themselves with the practice as a carer as they are also eligible for the flu jab.

A - PH Enfield: all residents of care homes and care home staff will be receiving flu immunisation.

Q8 - With surgeries closed, and social distancing required, how will people be notified about how they can obtain their flu jab?

A- GP: GP surgeries are not closed and have remained open throughout the pandemic but working in different ways. GP's have had to plan a safe delivery of flu this year to take into account the COVID

guidance and the specific needs of their patients and any logistical issues, e.g. buildings and staffing. Those between 50-64 years old will be contacted by the end of the year.

Q9 - What help is being offered to GPs to help with the expected high number of people wanting the flu jab?

A -GP: My patient volunteers have been helping with the flu clinic in our local car park. Patients can also support their practice by trying not to call the surgery if the information they require is available on their website.

Q10 - I would like details of the range of flu types the jab will be covering this year?

A GP: Every year the World Health Organisation tracks which strain of flu the public needs to be protected against. There are three strains of flu A, B & C. Most flu vaccinations are a combination of A&B's based on what is most likely for this year. Different strains affect different age groups so that is why there are different flu jabs based on age.

Q11 - My adult son has learning difficulties and is scared of needles - what are the options to help him have this as historically we've been unable to give him the jab - e.g. he has to have a blood test when he's under anaesthetic

A - GP: Please discuss this with your GP as they will be able to support based on the particular needs. But as an example, there may be medications that can be prescribed in extreme cases of severe anxiety. But it is very important to discuss this with your GP first. It's worth contacting your surgery as soon as possible to make arrangements so they can make reasonable adjustments to support him, as it's important your son get the flu jab, especially this year.

Q12 - Will there be an alternative flu vaccine for children which doesn't contain pork? Are alternatives available at GPs, or do we specifically request this at the GP?

A - GP: There are alternatives but they not as good, take longer to work and are not available at the moment. Manufacturers have tried 40 other agents, but nothing does the job as well as the porcine element in the nasal spray. It's important not to delay getting the flu jab but it is a personal choice.

A- PH Enfield -There is a limited supply of the alternative vaccine, which is less effective than the nasal spray for healthy children as Dr Shah has stressed, so children at risk will be prioritised for this vaccine. NHS England have said that parents who would prefer that their children did not have the nasal spray, can request the alternative vaccine, but it would not be available until November and only then if there was sufficient stock.

Q13 - How will those who are deaf and cannot read get information or be able to contact their GP to get their flu vaccine?

A - GP: Surgeries do have ways to contact patients with communication needs such as language line, video conferencing and interpreters including BSL. It is best to liaise with your surgery to discuss any such concerns so a solution that works for the patient can be found.

Q14 - Currently everything is online or phone to speak to the GP. How will GPs contact patients if they don't have a computer or mobile phone for receiving text messages?

A - GP: If patients don't have access to a smartphone or computer you can still call into the surgery to speak to a GP. Though, many patients ask family or friends to book appointments on their behalf. You can also contact voluntary sector groups who will be happy to help.

Q15 - If someone has a relative with a mental disability, does the hospital or care home have the right to give the flu jab without contacting the family for consent?

A - GP: This depends on the individual circumstances. If someone does have capacity, it will depend on what happened prior e.g. it's an expressed wish. If that hasn't been done, and they are in a care home setting and there is no family, the GP has to decide what's in the best interest of the patient. Usually a GP would try and contact the next of kin.

Q16 - How long does the immunity last with this flu vaccine?

A - GP: the flu jab lasts several months to be covered during peak season Sep -Jan. The flu jab changes yearly so it's worth getting it done on a yearly basis.

Q17- If we take it this year, due to increase in risk, etc - do we need to keep on taking the vaccination every year, or that won't be necessary?

A- PH Enfield- No.

Q18- If a young person has special needs (learning difficulties), but not a child, is a nasal spray recommended for them? If you have a disabled child in the family, can an adult privately get a jab from the pharmacy?

A-PH Enfield- All Primary School children and Y7 will be offered at school - so you do not need to contact your GP for these groups. Your GP should invite you in for your flu immunisation if you are eligible. If you are not in a group which is eligible for free flu immunisation residents can book private flu jabs at pharmacies across the borough. However, the nasal spray is not as effective as the flu injection in young adults, regardless of their needs.

Q19 - Our GP has said they are 'out of stock' for the vaccinations, and to wait till the end of the month. Are there alternative places we can get the vaccination from, i.e. Boots, or supermarket pharmacies - if a child or young person is in the eligible criteria?

A- PH Enfield - As Dr Shah said, currently pharmacies will be prioritising eligible groups such as the over 65's.

Q20- Is there a list available on Healthwatch's or Public Health England's websites or elsewhere, as to the eligible groups for flu vaccinations?

A- PH Enfield - A list is available on the NHS.UK website:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/flu-influenza-vaccine/>

More information is also available via this link: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/london/our-work/getting-the-flu-vaccine/>

Q21-: What's the prime difference between flu and Covid19? As when should the whole family self-isolate? It's very confusing?

A- GP: Covid19 symptoms: are feeling very hot, a new continuous cough, loss or change to your sense of smell or taste. You should self-isolate. If you also have breathing difficulties that stop you from doing your day to day activities, contact your GP or call 111.

Flu symptoms: feeling tired or exhausted, hot and cold sweats, achy limbs. If you're not sure get tested for Covid19 first. You can visit the www.gov.uk website to request the test. Listen to messages coming from government and take all the necessary precautions. It's also important to keep cupboards stocked with paracetamol etc.

A-PH Enfield: in terms of self-isolating, the individual has to self-isolate for 10 days from when showing symptoms. The individual's family will need to self-isolate for 14 days.

The World Health Organisation about the difference between flu and Coronavirus:

<https://www.who.int/westernpacific/news/q-a-detail/q-a-similarities-and-differences-covid-19-and-influenza>