

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release – 13 September 2017

Time to prepare – if you are in a health risk group don't delay and book your free flu jab today

With autumn now here and winter approaching, it's time for those at greatest risk from flu to protect themselves and their families, and get flu safe with a free flu jab.

Flu is a highly contagious infection that anyone can catch, and it can be a very serious illness for some. Those at greater risk from flu include people aged 65 or over, pregnant women, and those with health conditions such as severe asthma, chest or heart complaints and diabetes

NHS Thurrock CCG and Thurrock Public Health team are working together to ensure people at most risk protect themselves by getting a free flu jab from their GP. Everyone in Thurrock who knows anyone who may be at risk from flu is encouraged to tell them how important it is that they get protected. People who are carers and frontline health and social care staff are also encouraged to get a free jab to protect themselves and those around them.

Dr Deshpande, local GP and Chair of Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group said: "Flu is not just a cold – it can be a really serious illness for some people and it doesn't just affect older people. If you're pregnant, under 7 years old, have lowered immunity or a long term health condition such as severe asthma, a chest or heart complaint, or diabetes then you should also get a free flu jab from your GP and get flu safe. The flu jab is very safe, and it can't give you flu."

"Flu can increase the risk of developing more serious illnesses such as bronchitis and pneumonia, and can make existing conditions much worse. Flu can knock you off your feet and make it hard to look after family or go to work. In the most severe cases, seasonal flu might land you in hospital - it can even result in death."

"If you're in any of the 'at risk' groups, the flu jab is completely free and is a safe way of protecting you and your family in a matter of minutes."

The flu vaccine changes every year to fight the latest strains of flu, so even if you had a jab last winter you need another one this year to stay flu safe. The jab doesn't contain the 'live' virus so it cannot give you the flu.

Cllr James Halden, Portfolio Holder for Education and Health, said: “We are working together with local healthcare providers to really focus on getting a good level of flu vaccination this year. The groups which have particularly low take up are children aged 2 and 3, pregnant women and those at risk groups who are under 65. Both Thurrock Council and the CCG are taking robust action to ensure we have as many people in those groups vaccinated as possible.”

For young children, the flu vaccination is given as a nasal spray. The nasal spray vaccine has proved to be more effective in preventing flu in children than other flu vaccines.

Simply contact your GP or local community pharmacist to arrange a convenient appointment and get your jab. It’s quick, safe and free for those most at risk from the virus.

For more information visit www.nhs.uk/flu.

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This is a joint press release for Public Health Thurrock, Thurrock Council and NHS Thurrock CCG.

For more information about the flu vaccine, visit: nhs.uk/flu