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**Northamptonshire
Local Resilience Forum**

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Flu vaccine Long term Conditions

Press Release

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Do you have a long term health condition? Have you had your flu vaccine? If not get in touch with your GP or a local pharmacy.

Influenza, commonly known as flu, is a highly infectious viral illness. For most healthy people, the seasonal flu is mostly unpleasant. However, if you have a serious long term health condition such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease or if you have a BMI over 40, you are at particular risk from the more serious effects of flu. This can lead to complications, hospital admission and in some cases even death.

Public Health Northamptonshire and Northamptonshire Clinical Commissioning Group, are working together to ensure that all patients who have long term chronic health conditions receive their flu vaccination this year.

There are several reasons why this year in particular, it is vital to have your vaccination.

- If you are at higher risk from Coronavirus, then you are at increased risk of complications from the flu virus.
- If you get the flu virus and Coronavirus at the same time you are more likely to become extremely ill.
- It will help reduce pressures on the NHS, social care and support services who may be dealing with increased demand due to Coronavirus.

With the risk of COVID-19 circulating, this winter more than ever, the flu vaccination is vital to keep those at risk safe and protected. As seen with COVID-19, respiratory illnesses can be extremely serious and can be fatal. Those with co-infection of the two viruses are more at risk of severe respiratory complications or death, and most cases of co-infection are in older people and those at 'high risk'.

The NHS offers those at risk a free, safe and effective vaccination to reduce the chance of getting the flu and to reduce the risk of complications.

Dr Annapurna Sen from Public Health Northamptonshire said:

“There are around 88,500 people in Northamptonshire aged below 65 years with one or more long term conditions who are eligible for a vaccination. By 7th December, only 43,773 of these eligible people had been vaccinated; we require another 22,582 people to have their vaccination to protect themselves as well as the wider population.”

Dr Azhar Ali, Respiratory Disease Clinical Lead for NHS Northamptonshire CCG, as well as a GP, said:

“The flu jab is essential for people with a long term health condition which makes them more at risk of catching flu, and developing serious complications which may lead to a prolonged spell off work, hospital admission or even death.”

He also said “Vulnerable people with long term health conditions are more likely to develop complications:

- Flu can worsen a lung condition and aggravate breathing problems in people with COPD, asthma and other chronic lung diseases which can even lead to respiratory failure.
- Flu can make liver disease worse and increases the risk of rejecting of liver transplants
- People with neurological disease may find it more difficult to cough and clear fluid from their airways. Flu can give them very high temperature and make symptoms worse because neurological conditions can make it difficult to regulate their body temperature.
- A third of people with MS will have a relapse within 6 weeks of getting the flu.
- Flu also puts added stress on your body, which can affect your blood pressure, heart rate, and overall heart function. That can raise your chances of having a heart attack or stroke.

Anyone in doubt about whether they qualify for a free vaccination should contact their GP. Don't miss the opportunity to protect your health, speak to your GP practice or visit a local pharmacy for a vaccination.”

Any more details can be obtained from:

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

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Notes to editors

- This briefing has been issued on behalf of the Northamptonshire local Resilience Forum and Public Health Northamptonshire
- Media enquiries should be sent to: nccg.urgentresponsecomms@nhs.net