

NEWS RELEASE

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DON'T FORGET YOUR FLU JAB!

And it doesn't give you flu – contrary to what the majority of people in the South West think

60 per cent of people in the South West wrongly believe that the flu jab actually gives people the flu, according to the latest Department of Health poll.

Now the Chief Medical Officer, Professor Dame Sally Davies, is urging everyone in the South West in an 'at risk' group to come forward and join the estimated seven million people who have already had the vaccine this year. And to encourage take up of the vaccine, Dame Sally is making clear that the vaccine does **not** give people the flu.

"It can save your life, though. Flu can kill – and it can be particularly dangerous for people in at risk groups. They are on average 11 times more likely to die from flu than a healthy person is.", she said.

And this week NHS North Somerset director of Public Health Becky Pollard has added her voice to the call for everyone entitled to the jab to receive it before the flu season sets in. She said: "People in an at risk group are more likely to die if they get flu, than a "healthy" person. The jab is free and available for everyone in North Somerset especially at risk of flu. All you need to do if you fall into this category is to telephone your GP and make an appointment to attend one of the vaccination sessions."

Latest national figures published this week show that the following people have already received the vaccination this year:

- 55 per cent (5.1 million) of people aged 65 or over;
- 32 per cent (1.8 million) of people under the age of 65 in at risk groups; and
- 14 per cent (51,000) of pregnant women

People who have a liver disease, heart or chest problems, neurological conditions, those aged 65 or over and all pregnant women are among the

groups being urged to make an appointment with their GP to have a flu jab if they haven't already done so.

The Chief Medical Officer has said that she wants to see 75 per cent of the 65 years and older group and 60 per cent of under 65s in at risk groups get vaccinated this year.

Dame Sally added: "I can categorically state that the flu jab does not give you flu. The vaccine does not include the live virus. If you haven't been called for a flu jab and are in an at risk group, it's time to contact your GP to make an appointment. If you're in an at risk group, it's free on the NHS."

- ends -

Editors note:

People in an at risk group include:

- people with diabetes are 6 times more likely to die if they get flu than a "healthy" person;
- people with chronic heart disease are 11 times more likely to die if they get flu than a "healthy" person;
- people with chronic respiratory disease are 7 times more likely to die if they get flu than a "healthy" person;
- people with chronic renal disease are 19 times more likely to die if they get flu than a "healthy" person;
- people with chronic liver disease are 48 times more likely to die if they get flu than a "healthy" person;
- people undergoing medical treatment who may have a compromised immune system are 47 times more likely to die if they get flu than a "healthy" person; and
- people with a neurological condition such as multiple sclerosis (MS) or cerebral palsy are 40 times more likely to die if they get flu than a "healthy" person.

Everyone who falls into the following groups is advised to have the flu vaccine:

- people aged 65 years or over;
- pregnant women in any stage of pregnancy;
- people living in a residential or nursing home; or
- the main carer for an older or disabled person.

People with the following conditions are also advised to have the flu vaccine:

- a heart problem;

- a chest complaint or breathing difficulties including, bronchitis, emphysema;
- a kidney disease;

- lowered immunity due to disease or treatment (such as steroid medication or cancer treatment);
- a liver disease;
- had a stroke or a transient ischaemic attack (TIA);
- diabetes;
- a neurological condition e.g. multiple sclerosis (MS) or cerebral palsy; and
- a problem with, or removal of, your spleen e.g. sickle cell disease.

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