

## Flu Immunisation. Special Edition



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It's that time of the year again!

At a national level, NHS England are constantly striving to improve the effectiveness of the annual flu immunisation programme in order to reduce the pressures on our healthcare systems through the difficult winter period.

The Joint Committee on Vaccines and Immunisations (JCVI) advises the government on matters like the flu immunisation programme. This year they have recommended a different vaccine for people who are aged 65 and over. There is strong evidence from other countries that this new vaccine is more effective in creating immunity amongst the more elderly population. If this is the case then it could have a significant positive impact on general practice and the hospital and community services this winter. For this reason it's a very positive development.

The new vaccine - it's called Adjuvanted Trivalent Vaccine (aTIV) - is only manufactured by one company in the UK so in order to meet the huge demand the vaccines are being delivered in three phases through September – November. There will still be enough vaccine for everybody that wants it but it does mean that our vaccination programme at Ainsdale Medical Centre is going to go on for longer than usual and some patients will have to wait until later in the Autumn to be vaccinated.

**To accommodate these phased deliveries of the Over-65 vaccine we have had to make some changes to our entire adult programme.**

To help all our patients of all ages to better understand how they can get their flu vaccination at the surgery this Autumn we have dedicated this edition of our newsletter to explaining more about how it will work and why some of the changes have been introduced.

## Communications



We have written to all our adult patients who are eligible for a free flu vaccination ( mailed out on 10<sup>th</sup> September) to explain how to access our clinics.

We will follow up with SMS messages for those consenting patients for whom we hold a mobile phone number and we will send SMS reminders and notifications about upcoming clinics to those patients who have yet to be vaccinated or have not formally declined the vaccination.

Our website also has helpful information and we will update it during the coming weeks if there are recurring themes coming up in our conversations with patients that need clarification.

This newsletter should also help answer lots of questions that arise from the new arrangements for this years vaccination. We have included some answers to frequently asked questions.

We always experience a steep increase in telephone volumes during the flu season and we expect this year to be even busier because of the more complex arrangements. Please don't call us unless you have to – look at our other resources first – so that we can keep the phone lines clear for patients calling about more other things that they need help with. We are sorry if you have to wait a little longer to get through during the next few busy weeks.

## The Numbers



**Ainsdale Medical Centre has just shy of 6000 patients who are eligible for a free NHS flu vaccine. That's not far off half of all our patients.**

There simply isn't the space or the workforce capacity to vaccinate that many patients at the surgery in the space of a few weeks.

We rely heavily on our patients to come to the special community clinics which we hold at Ainsdale Methodist Church and where we can move patients more quickly through the vaccination process.

We have worked hard over the last few years to make the flu clinics a safe and pleasant experience with shorter waiting times, free tea and coffee and a health fair which gives people the chance to meet and talk with organisations that can help them and perhaps also help people that they look after.

Please make the effort to attend the appropriate clinic this year and help us to keep the appointments at the surgery for other important things.

## **Adults Over 65 years old.**



The biggest problem we face this year is that the deliveries of the Over-65 vaccine are being phased in three batches over approximately seven weeks between mid-September and early-November.

└ We will have enough vaccine in total for everyone that wants to be vaccinated but it means we will have to spread-out our flu clinic dates.

In line with national guidance from NHS England we are prioritising patients according to age. We regret that we will be unable to deviate outside of these age bandings or we run the risk of leaving some of the older and possibly more vulnerable patients without a vaccination.

Your letter will tell you the date of the community clinic that you are invited to. We have included them below as a reminder.

<p><b>Wednesday</b></p> <p><b>26</b></p> <p><b>September</b></p> <p><b>78+ years only</b></p> <p>9:30am – 4:00pm</p> <p>Come anytime on this day</p>	<p><b>Wednesday</b></p> <p><b>17</b></p> <p><b>October</b></p> <p>75-77 years only</p> <p>9:30am – 1.00pm</p> <p>Note this is a morning only clinic</p>	<p><b>Wednesday</b></p> <p><b>7</b></p> <p><b>November</b></p> <p>65 years +</p> <p>9:30am – 4:00pm</p> <p>Come anytime on this day</p>
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Our friends at **Healthwatch**, **Ainsdale Lunch and Leisure** and **Ainsdale Methodist Church** are once again organising the **Health Fair** in the church hall in parallel with our community clinics. This is a great chance for you to meet with charitable organisations and NHS provider organisations who can provide invaluable support to you and people you care for. Free tea and coffee is provided so why not stop for a chat after you have been vaccinated.

We are also indebted to the volunteers from our **Patient Participation Group (PPG)** who this year will be helping us with stewarding in the church. We anticipate that patients will have more questions than in previous years because of the new vaccine so it will be helpful to have some extra pairs of hands. Feel free to ask them also about the work of the PPG at Ainsdale Medical Centre.

### **What if I can't attend on the day of the clinic.**

We do need everyone to get to the age-appropriate community clinics if they possibly can. Unlike previous years it won't be possible to switch between clinics because of the restriction on vaccine availability.

We will announce some other catch-up clinics but only **after** each community clinic has been completed. Only then will we know how many patients are left to vaccinate. This will be subject to availability of vaccines. Check our website or call the surgery two working days after the clinic date to find out details. Please don't ring the surgery to tell us that you can't come to the community clinic.

Please don't come to a clinic if you are not in the age group set for that clinic as we will have to turn you away.

### **I'm housebound and I can't make it to the community clinic.**

We are happy for people who are genuinely housebound to contact the surgery and request an immunisation at their home. However we respectfully ask that you only do this if you are housebound. If you can leave your house with assistance to attend hospital or social appointments then we would expect you to come to the clinics. We take extra care of our very frail patients and those with limited mobility and make sure the trip is as easy as we can make it for you.

### **I'm 72 but I would like to have the Under-65s vaccine as I don't want to wait until the vaccine for over-65s is delivered.**

The surgery has to follow the recommendations of the JCVI and we are unable to use any other vaccine for Over-65s than the aTIV vaccine. The aTIV is recommended for Over-65s because it gives better protection to people in that age group.

### **Can I get the Over-65's vaccine done privately so I can get it sooner.**

All providers that are contracted by NHS England to provide flu vaccinations to the Over 65s are bound by the same recommendations as we are and the entire supply of aTIV is ring-fenced for NHS patients.

### **Is November a bit late to be getting immunised.**

The delivery schedule has been sanctioned by NHS England who have given this advice :-

*Flu usually starts from December onwards, it can be earlier, but if you are vaccinated in November you should benefit from its protective effect. **It is better to wait for the vaccine that is most effective for your age group.***

### **Im only 59 but the Over-65s vaccine sounds better. Can I have it?**

No. The aTIV vaccine is only licenced for patients aged 65 and over.

## **Adults 18-65 years old.**

The free NHS Flu immunisation programme includes people who are aged under 65 who have certain specified long term conditions and also people in other categories such as pregnant women and people who care for another family member.

The clinical conditions evolve from one year to the next but , if you are under 65, then you have received this communication because you fall into one of the categories according to our records. You don't need to contact us to ask why you are included – if you want the vaccine then come along to the clinics; if you don't then just let us know by following the guidance below.

The recommendation of the JCVI is that people between the ages of 18 – 65 are given the Quadrivalent vaccine (QIV). There are no restrictions on the deliveries of this vaccine and it should be in good supply from mid-September.

However, the arrangements for 18-65 year olds will be slightly different this year because this age group will have a different vaccine from the 65+ age group. We have looked in detail at managing community clinics for both age groups and therefore both vaccines together but there are too many issues and we have concluded it is not possible.

Therefore we have organised a single community clinic on the afternoon and evening of 17<sup>th</sup> October and we hope that as many as possible of this group will be able to attend.

We will organise other drop-in and appointments only sessions for this age group both before and after the 17<sup>th</sup> October and we will advertise these by SMS and on our website, surgery noticeboards.



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## **18 - 65 year old community clinic**

**3pm – 8pm**

### **Ainsdale Methodist Church**

*Please use the front entrance of the church*

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#### **DID YOU KNOW?**

The Partners at every GP Practice have to commit to the volume of flu vaccinations they purchase almost one year in advance. We have ordered enough vaccine for all our patients who are eligible and who usually take up the vaccines. Although you can get free vaccine elsewhere it will impact the profitability of the surgery if we are left with a lot of unused vaccines and this could impact on service levels at the practice in the future.

## **Children's Flu Vaccinations**



The Children's flu programme is largely unchanged from previous years.

The programme in its entirety covers children from 2 to 9 years old – that's the two pre-school years and school years from Reception up to and including Year 5.

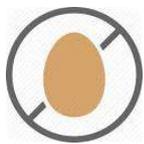
If your child is at school the School nursing service will take care of vaccinating your child using the now familiar Fluenz Nasal spray. If they are off on the day of the vaccinations at your school then the School nurses will organise catch- up sessions.

We will vaccinate pre-school children who were 2 or older on September 1<sup>st</sup> 2018. We usually hold clinics during the week before October half term and during half term itself to give parents as much flexibility as possible.

We will also vaccinate any children between two and seventeen who have certain long-term conditions.

We will write or SMS message you during early October if your child is eligible to be vaccinated at the surgery to let you know about the clinics we will be holding.

## **'Egg-Free' Vaccines**



Patients who have suffered a severe anaphylaxis to egg (e.g. required intensive care) will be referred to specialists for immunisation in hospital. Other adult patients can be immunised in the community using an inactivated influenza vaccine with ovalbumin content less than 0.12 micrograms/ml (equivalent to 0.06 micrograms for a 0.5 ml dose). The ovalbumin content of aTIV and other 2018/19 flu vaccines will be published here:

## **What to Do if You Don't Want a Flu Vaccine**



The immunity in a community generally grows stronger the more people that are vaccinated. However, not everyone wants to take up the offer.

If you want to decline the flu vaccine let us know and we will add a code to your medical record that will stop us from chasing you up during the remainder of the vaccination season.

You can do this by following the instructions on any of the reminder texts you cancel or by dropping a slip of paper including your full name and date of birth. Write clearly on the slip of paper that you wish to decline a flu vaccine this year.