



## Infection Prevention & Control

### Seasonal Flu (Influenza)

#### A patient's guide



#### Flu vaccine

The seasonal flu vaccine is given every year starting in September. Some people are recommended to have the free yearly vaccine as they are more likely to have a severe illness (see below). The vaccine contains a dead virus which cannot give you the flu, although some may get mild flu like symptoms following the injection. As the flu strain causing illness changes year-to-year, you need to have a yearly vaccination to protect you from the new strains.

#### Who should get the flu vaccine?

- Anyone over 65
- Pregnant women
- Children and adults with an underlying health condition (such as long-term heart or respiratory disease)
- Children and adults with weakened immune systems
- Children aged 2 and 3 on 31 August 2019
- Children in primary school
- Frontline health or social care workers

Vaccines are also available from pharmacies at a cost to all others.

#### What type of flu vaccine should I have?

You will be offered the one that is most effective for your age.

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

#### Any further questions

If you have any questions or require further information please contact a member of the Infection Prevention and Control Team on 0207 288 3261 or you can ask the ward manager to contact us.

#### Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or [whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net)

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please contact us on 020 7288 3182. We will try our best to meet your needs.

Twitter.com/WhitHealth  
Facebook.com/WhittingtonHealth

Whittington Health NHS Trust  
Magdala Avenue  
London  
N19 5NF  
Phone: 020 7272 3070  
[www.whittington.nhs.uk](http://www.whittington.nhs.uk)

Date published: 03/12/2019  
Review date: 03/12/2020  
Ref: GEN/NPE/IPC/SF(I)/02

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### What is flu?

Flu or influenza is a virus that can cause a respiratory infection that is similar, but more severe, than a cold.

However the symptoms of flu usually come on more suddenly and are more severe.

Symptoms include a high temperature **with –**

- Feeling shivery
- Headache
- Aching body
- Extreme tiredness
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Diarrhoea and vomiting

Most people recover within a week or two. Though for some, influenza can be much more severe.

### How does flu spread?

Flu can be highly infectious and is spread from person to person. If someone with flu coughs or sneezes they can spread the virus into the air and onto surfaces. If you breathe in or touch the virus, you could develop the disease.

If you have become infected, flu symptoms usually start within 1 to 4 days.

### What if I have the flu?

If you have the flu you should follow some simple measures:

- Rest in bed
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Eat as well as you can
- Take paracetamol following dosage guidelines carefully

### Help prevent the spread of flu!



### Should I visit the doctor?

Visiting your GP or Accident and Emergency carries a high risk of exposing others to flu. You should not visit. If you do not recover within a few days or develop a persistent cough then phone your GP.

**Remember:** *the flu is a virus and is not killed by antibiotics, so do not expect antibiotics for flu or colds.*

### What if you are in hospital with the flu?

If you are in hospital and are thought to have flu then a number of things may happen:

- A single swab from your throat and nose will be taken to find out if you do have the flu.
- You may be given anti-viral medication. This does not stop you from getting the flu but can reduce the severity of the symptoms and shorten the illness.
- If you are admitted with flu, you are likely to be put in isolation to reduce the risk of giving it to other patients.

### Flu outbreak

If you are part of an outbreak of flu, you may be isolated within a ward with other patients with or without symptoms as everyone has been exposed. You may be given anti-viral medication to reduce the risk of developing the flu. Although this will not stop the flu, if you do get ill, it will be less severe and of a shorter duration.