

Dear Care Home Managers.

We are fast approaching the flu season and I thought it would be useful to highlight actions that care homes can take in relation to the provision of flu vaccination for residents and staff.

The requirement to protect patients, residents, staff and visitors from the risks of infection is made clear in the Health and Social Care Act 2008.

Many care homes have procedures in place for the provision for flu vaccinations for residents and staff and your efforts to protect residents and staff in this respect are very much appreciated.

The benefits of the provision of flu vaccination to residents

For those homes where the provision of immunisation for residents could be improved, there is much to be gained from ensuring flu immunisations are provided for your residents.

This includes;

- Protection of your vulnerable residents from the threat to their health if they develop flu. Sadly for the elderly, developing flu can have a very serious impact on them.
- Reduction of the risk of having an outbreak of flu in your care home. Outbreaks can be very distressing for all and are operationally very challenging.
- Reduction of the risk that staff may acquire flu from sick residents
- Having evidence to demonstrate compliance with CQC requirements in terms of the Health and Social Care Act 2008.

All GP's in Buckinghamshire are providing flu vaccine to all their patient over the age of 65 or with any of the risk conditions for flu, like stroke, heart disease and chronic lung disease. Vaccination is also recommended for all people in long stay residential homes. Practices should have arrangements to come out to homes if patients cannot attend the surgery for the vaccination. We would strongly recommend that you contact all the GP's of your patients and make arrangements for them to have the vaccine as early on in October as possible so they are protected for the entire flu season.

The benefits of provision of flu vaccination to staff

The department of health has made it clear that as providers of health and social care, care homes have a responsibility as employers to offer vaccination to their staff as well as their residents. There are very good reasons why it makes sense to have a policy of offering flu vaccination to your staff.

The benefits of providing flu vaccines to your staff include;

- Protection for staff, reducing the risk that they will have to suffer a flu illness
- Reduction of the risk that staff may spread flu to their families
- Reduction of the risk that flu is spread from staff to vulnerable residents in the home, including the elderly who due to their age may not develop robust immunity to flu following immunisation.
- Reduction of the risk of having a flu outbreak in your care home
- Reduction in the level of staff absence due to sickness.

Suggestions for provision of flu immunisations to staff

If you have no occupational health service provision then some pharmacies, including some supermarket pharmacies offer flu immunisation. In previous years they have been about £15 or less per person, so you could make an arrangement with a local pharmacy providing this service. Any staff eligible for free vaccination due to an underlying medical condition or pregnancy should be encouraged to obtain this from their GP as soon as it is available.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss how you can improve the provision of flu vaccination for either your residents or your staff.

Best wishes

Lucy

Dr Lucy Jessop
Consultant in Public Health
NHS Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Cluster
Rapid House
40 Oxford Road
High Wycombe
HP11 2EE
01494 552253
lucy.jessop@buckinghamshire.nhs.uk
www.buckinghamshire.nhs.uk