

Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet is for patients with long term heart conditions, and explains the importance of having a FREE annual flu vaccine to protect you from getting the influenza virus, commonly known as 'flu'.

Am I at risk?

Long term heart conditions fall into many different categories. If you have a heart condition you have a greater risk of becoming more seriously ill from flu than the general population. If you think you need a FREE flu vaccine you can discuss this with your Cardiology/Heart Nurse, Practice Nurse or GP.

Some Long Term Heart Conditions

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|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) | |
| Angina | Abnormal Heart Rhythm |
| Atherosclerosis | Atrial Fibrillation |
| Brugada syndrome | Cardiac Arrest |
| Cardiomyopathy | Cardiovascular disease |
| Coronary Heart Disease | Heart Attack |
| Congenital Heart Disease | Heart Failure |
| Familial Hypercholesterolaemia | |
| Heart Valve Disease | Long QT syndrome |
| PCCD | Stroke |

What is Flu?

Many people think having flu is like having a bad cold, but in reality flu is a nasty respiratory virus which can make you feel very unwell. For those people who have a

long term heart conditions getting flu can make your heart problems much worse and can lead to problems with other organs in your body. The risk is much greater than for people who are normally fit and healthy. Some of these complications can be life threatening. Every year over 11,000 people in England die from complications caused by the flu virus. Many of these deaths could have been prevented by having the flu vaccination.

Why is this important for you?

If you have had a heart transplant or are waiting for one you are at greater risk of complications from flu.

Having a heart condition can limit the types of drugs you can have to help treat the flu virus and any complications. If you take warfarin, flu symptoms can affect your blood clotting rate (INR). It may mean spending time in hospital and taking a long time to recover from the effects of the treatment and the virus.

There is evidence that heart attacks happen more often during or immediately after an acute inflammatory illness, such as flu.

Preventing flu in the first place is the best option.

How can you protect yourself?

The most effective way to protect yourself from flu is to have a FREE Flu Vaccine each winter.

The flu vaccination season runs from October to February, but most people get flu in December and January, so the sooner you have the vaccination the sooner you will be protected.

It is important to have the vaccination every year because the virus can change, and the previous year's vaccine may not offer you the right protection against the virus in circulation this year.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Can flu be treated with antibiotics?

A. No. Flu is a virus and the only way to be really protected is with a flu vaccine.

Q. Will having the vaccine give me flu?

A. No. The vaccine contains an inactive form of the virus which cannot cause flu. Some people may have a sore arm and mild aches and pains which means the vaccine is working and should only last 48 hours.

Q. Is the vaccine safe?

A. Yes. The vaccine is known to be very safe and can be given to babies and very elderly people with very few problems or reactions.

Where can I get a vaccine?

Having your vaccination at your GP Practice

Everybody who is eligible for a FREE Flu Vaccine can get one at their GP Practice from early October.

You may receive an invitation by letter, telephone call, text message or email or the information may be on the GP Practice website, depending on how your GP Practice communicates with their patients.

Many GP Practices will hold large flu vaccination clinics, and you may not need an appointment for these special clinics. It is best to find out dates and times by calling them or checking on the Practice website.

If you have not heard about getting a flu vaccination by early October it is really important that you call your GP Practice to arrange an appointment to have a vaccination.

If somebody voluntarily cares for you they can also have a FREE flu vaccination so they don't become ill and have to stop looking after you.

Remember the earlier you have your vaccination, the better protected you will be.

Having your vaccination in a community pharmacy

It may be more convenient for you to have your FREE Flu Vaccine at a participating community pharmacy – particularly if you work full time or find it difficult to get to your GP Practice. Many community pharmacies can offer this service for patients who are eligible for a FREE Flu Vaccine. If you have the vaccination in a pharmacy they will take your details and let your GP Practice know you have had the vaccination.

If you need more information:

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/pages/flu-influenza-vaccine.aspx>

<http://www.bhf.org.uk/publications/heart-conditions/medical-information-sheets/seasonal-influenza>

The Flu Vaccination is **FREE** and **EFFECTIVE**
book your appointment today



Flu Vaccinations and You

Flu Vaccinations and Long Term Heart Conditions



What flu is

Why you are at risk

Where to get a vaccine

It's FREE because YOU need it