

## Influenza Season 2018-2019 /changes

### The Frequently Asked Questions

- 1) Who is eligible for a flu vaccine from pharmacies?
  - those aged 18 years to under 65 years in clinical risk groups (see PSNC/NHS Choices for the full details)
  - pregnant women
  - those aged 65 years and over
  - those in long-stay residential care homes
  - carers
  - Employed adult health and social care staff (aged 18 years and over)
- 2) What are the changes to this year's flu vaccine programme?

This year, three types of flu vaccine will be used in the flu programme.

  - **Adjuvanted trivalent flu vaccine (aTIV)** - This is licensed for people aged 65 years and over and is the best vaccine for effective flu prevention in this age group. The deliveries of aTIV to practices and pharmacies will be staged 40% in September, October 20%, and 40% November.
  - **Quadrivalent vaccine (QIV)** - This is recommended for children aged from 6 months to 2 years and in adults from 18 years to less than 65 years of age who are at increased risk from flu because of a long term health condition.
  - **Live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV)** – Not used in pharmacies! This is a nasal spray and is licensed for children and young people from 2 years old to less than 18 years of age. If LAIV is clinically contraindicated QIV is used in this age group.
- 3) Must patients 65 years and over have the new more effective flu vaccine?
  - Yes they should - the adjuvanted flu vaccine (aTIV) is the recommended flu vaccine for people in this age group. This is because aTIV is likely to give much better protection against flu. It would therefore be best to wait until we have more supplies of aTIV which we know will offer you the best protection.
- 4) Is having aTIV in November too late to offer protection?
  - 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.
- 5) What if a 68 year old patient asks to have quadrivalent influenza vaccine (QIV) now because you have it in stock, rather than coming back for aTIV in November?
  - The aTIV flu vaccine is the best flu vaccine for all people aged 65 years and over. This is because the aTIV is likely to give much better protection against flu. Therefore it is best to wait until we have more supplies of aTIV which we know will offer you the best protection.

- 6) Is aTIV available elsewhere if your practice/community pharmacy has run out?
- All local pharmacies and general practice are having supplies of aTIV flu vaccine phased between September and November. Patients can make appointments in advance in some pharmacies for when the vaccine is available!
- 7) A patient asks if they can get aTIV if they pay privately.
- All patients aged over 65 years are eligible for vaccination on the NHS. General practices and community pharmacies will be using their supplies of aTIV for NHS provision. Make patients aware of when you expect your next delivery and how to make an appointment for the vaccine. Stress the importance of returning for vaccination as this is the best protection against flu.
- 8) A patient aged under 65 years in a clinical risk group has heard about the new aTIV vaccine and asks why they can't receive it.
- The aTIV is only licensed for use in people aged 65 years and over. Younger people do not need the additional potency of the aTIV because they have more active immune systems, hence the QIV will provide the protection they need.
- 9) People who have their 65th birthday before 31st March 2019 will be eligible for influenza vaccine so may not be 65 when they are immunised. Which vaccine should they have?
- It is appropriate to offer the more effective for the older person vaccine the aTIV "off label" to those having their 65th birthday before 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 and who are thus eligible to receive influenza vaccine under the current definition of the 'over 65' group.
- 10) If adjuvanted flu vaccine is stronger, does it have more side effects?
- YES patients are likely to notice more side effects than past vaccines (this is because the vaccine is more effective) common non-serious side effect that will disappear over a few days e.g. local reaction of pain and redness around the injection site; headache, giddiness (the feeling of a mild cold).
- 11) What is the additional ingredient in the aTIV vaccine to make it more effective?
- The adjuvant Squalene, a naturally occurring substance found in humans, animals and plants.
- 12) Is aTIV suitable for a patient with an egg allergy?
- NO it has a higher amount of egg used in the vaccine - Full guidance on use of flu vaccine in patients with egg allergy is in the Green Book.
- 13) What flu vaccines should health and social care workers expect to receive?
- NHS providers should be planning to offer the quadrivalent vaccine (QIV) for healthcare workers aged under 65 years. Those aged 65 years and over are should be offered adjuvanted trivalent flu vaccine (aTIV).

**References:** Adapted from Flu Vaccination Programme Delivery Guidance 2018-19 NHSE, Flud SPC, nfluenza vaccines for the 2017/18 influenza season PHE.