

Government wants you to get your flu jab!

At-risk Scots were today encouraged to protect themselves and their loved ones by getting the seasonal flu jab.

Health Secretary Nicola Sturgeon launched the seasonal flu campaign with a group of unpaid carers – who formed a 30ft human barrier to highlight the benefits of the vaccine.

GP practices across Scotland will now begin to contact patients to invite them for vaccination.

H1N1 is expected to be the predominant circulating strain this flu season, and this year's vaccine will protect against three strains of influenza, including H1N1.

The following groups will be eligible for this season's vaccine:

- * Those aged 65 years of age and over
- * Those with a medical condition which puts them in an 'at risk' group
- * NHS healthcare staff
- * Unpaid carers
- * Pregnant women

This year's campaign will target pregnant women for the first time, and there will be a drive to highlight the fact that unpaid carers are also eligible for vaccination.

Ms Sturgeon said:

"For those at risk, the complications of seasonal flu can be deadly. The best way to protect yourself is to get the jab.

"If you know someone who is at risk please encourage them to come forward for vaccination to protect themselves and those

they care about.

“This year’s campaign will highlight the fact that unpaid carers in Scotland are eligible for seasonal flu vaccination. There are over 650,00 unpaid carers in Scotland and many don’t realise that they are eligible for the vaccine. It is vitally important that they come forward to protect themselves and the people they care for.

Chief Medical Officer Dr Harry Burns said:

“H1N1 is expected to be the main circulating virus this flu season. People should receive the vaccination to protect them from the circulating viruses.

“Pregnant women will be offered the vaccine this year. This is because H1N1 is likely to be the main circulating virus this flu season and pregnant women have been noted to be at greater risk of complications of H1N1 influenza infection.

“We should not underestimate seasonal flu – it is a very serious illness. I would urge everyone who is entitled to receive a flu vaccine to get one as soon as possible.”

Public information leaflets about the seasonal flu campaign will be available and distributed to GP surgeries, pharmacies, health boards and voluntary health organisations.

As in previous years, a personalised letter will be sent to everyone aged 65 and over inviting them for vaccination. In addition, a new television advert has been developed and will run for four weeks from Monday, October 11, in addition a radio advert has also been developed.

In the community, the vaccine will be available to those eligible from healthcare staff in GP surgeries and they will be invited to attend the practice to get their vaccine. Healthcare workers are usually vaccinated through their occupational health service.

Each year in Scotland in excess of a million doses of seasonal flu vaccine are made available for those aged 65 or over, those under the age of 65 at risk of complications as a result of flu, as well as healthcare staff eligible for the flu vaccine.

Those people considered to be 'at risk' are people of all ages with long-term illnesses, including:

- * Chronic respiratory disease, e.g. asthma needing regular inhaled or oral steroids; chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- * Chronic heart conditions
- * Diabetes
- * Chronic kidney or liver disease
- * Chronic neurological conditions, e.g. stroke or multiple sclerosis
- * Lowered immunity due to disease or treatment, e.g. chemotherapy or radiotherapy treatment for cancer or long-term steroid use

Any other serious medical condition – patients are advised to consult their doctor, practice nurse or pharmacist.