

Vulnerable groups urged to get flu vaccination



Scotland's most senior medical officer has called on people with underlying health conditions in the Lothians to get protected from flu following the release of new figures showing that over half of people in this group were still to be vaccinated this year.

Scotland's Chief Medical Officer, Sir Harry Burns made his plea as new figures were released for flu vaccination uptake since the campaign started on 1 October 2013. The figures show that a number of people have yet to be vaccinated in the Lothians NHS area, including:

- 54 per cent of people under 65 with underlying health problems such as asthma and diabetes
- 58 per cent of pregnant women
- 56 per cent of two and three year olds

Getting protected from flu is important for individuals with underlying health conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, cystic fibrosis, MS and other heart, lung and liver problems and those suffering from lowered immunity) as well as pregnant women. These groups can be hit harder with flu and can suffer more serious complications, even if they previously felt fit and healthy.

Catching flu can cause unnecessary worry for friends and family as well as posing a risk of spreading the virus.

Sir Harry said, "Flu strikes suddenly and it's important to be prepared. If you have a long-term medical condition, the best way to protect yourself is to get the vaccine. It is not too

late for those who have not received their flu vaccine to do so.

“The flu vaccine only takes a few minutes, but will offer protection for around 12 months.”

“It is equally as important to ensure that if your child is invited to get vaccinated against flu, you take up the offer as children are unlikely to have built up immunity from previous infections. In fact, youngsters are two to three times as likely to be ill with flu than adults.

Dr Lorna Willocks, Flu Immunisation Co-ordinator at NHS Lothian, said: “Flu survives better in a cold environment and flu viruses will circulate across Scotland as we move deeper into winter. People need to be aware that flu is much worse than a bad cold and can make adults and children very unwell.

“If you are in an eligible group then it’s very important to ensure that you are vaccinated to reduce the risk of you catching flu and suffer serious complications. I would like to urge all remaining local people who are eligible for the flu vaccine to speak with their GP practice to arrange to get their free vaccination.”

If you would like to find out more information about the flu vaccine, contact NHS Inform on 0800 22 44 88 or log on to www.immunisationscotland.org.uk.