

Don't miss out on your vital flu jab

Flu might be the last thing on your mind this moment, but it's vitally important that you protect your health this winter. In England one in three people are entitled to a free flu vaccination, yet last year only 70% of those eligible in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland took up the offer.

Flu is not just a bad cold – it can be extremely serious, even if you're already fit and healthy when you catch it. For those who already have a long term health condition, are pregnant or are over 65, it can be even more dangerous as your body will struggle more to fight off the illness and you are more at risk of complications such as bronchitis or pneumonia. Children are also more at risk. Please don't risk your health as flu can, and does, kill. It's vital you have the flu jab if you're eligible.

There are a lot of myths about flu that have circulated over the years. Many people worry that the vaccine can give you the flu. Please be assured that this isn't possible as there is no live influenza virus in the vaccine. There is no need to worry about giving the vaccine to your children, or if you are pregnant, the vaccine affecting your baby.

Children are more at risk than any other age group of needing to be admitted to hospital if they catch the flu, so it's extremely important to keep them safe with a vaccination. If you're pregnant, catching the flu can increase the risk of miscarriage and premature birth, but having the vaccine not only protects you, but also can protect your baby in the first few months of life.

We know a lot of patients with asthma, particularly when they manage it well, don't think they need the flu jab to protect them. But the flu can affect your lungs when you have asthma, causing your airways to narrow, which could trigger an attack. So if you suffer from asthma, it's particularly important to get vaccinated.

So, if you're eligible, please make sure that you get the free flu jab from the NHS. It might save your life.