

Learning disability patients

and flu vaccination



Key points to note:

All patients with a learning disability, and their carers, are entitled to a free NHS flu vaccine, administered by their GP

- ✓ Flu vaccination for people with learning disabilities has been a priority for the NHS since 2014/15 flu season, following The Confidential Inquiry into the Deaths of People with Learning Disabilities report ¹
- ✓ If there is an unclear diagnosis, but the clinician feels the person would benefit from the flu vaccine, administer, and record as “Needs flu vaccination” to ensure reimbursement
- ✓ In 2018 and 2019, the most frequently reported underlying causes of death in people with learning disabilities were disorders of the respiratory system ²
- ✓ Reasonable adjustments should be made to support people with learning disabilities to accept the flu vaccination
 - Preparation by desensitisation
 - Support to make an informed decision using videos and easy read leaflets
 - Use of topical numbing creams
 - If desensitisation and support are not successful, the nasal flu spray can be offered and administered on a PSD

¹ [The Confidential Inquiry into the Deaths of People with Learning Disability \(CIPOLD\) report](#)

² [The Learning Disabilities Mortality Review \(LeDeR\) Programme Annual report 2020](#)



Message from: Hilary Gardner
Strategic Liaison Learning Disability Nurse
For Primary Health across Hertfordshire
Hertfordshire County Council

“You reached a Hertfordshire countywide average around 90% vaccination success with this patient group for Covid Vaccine and many of you received Purple Star Vaccination Recognition for the reasonable adjustments you made to overcome the barriers to vaccination. Please aim for the same success for their Flu Vaccines.”

“If you struggle to over the barriers to successful vaccination, please contact the Community Learning Disability nursing service for advice and support on ldnursereferrals@hertfordshire.gov.uk”.

Have all the patients on your learning disability register been offered an annual health check where the flu vaccination has been discussed?

For those aged 18-49, not having an annual health check in the previous year, increased the likelihood of dying by 50%²

Message from: Barbara Hamill
Screening & Immunisation Manager
NHS England – East of England

“Our population of people with learning disabilities remains high on our agenda for improvement in flu vaccine uptake. We consider this group to be among our ‘super at risk’ and therefore every effort should be made to engage with the individual and their families and carers, to ensure vaccination is offered and administered, where clinically appropriate.

Thank you for your continued endeavours with the flu programme in these very challenging times. If any immunisation advice is needed, please email england.immsqa@nhs.net.”



What is the expectation for immunising the learning disability cohort?

The national flu immunisation programme 2021/22

[National flu immunisation programme plan - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/94222/national-flu-immunisation-programme-plan-2021-22.pdf)

The national flu immunisation programme 2021 to 2022

Appendix A: Groups included in the national influenza immunisation programme

1. In 2021 to 2022, influenza vaccinations will be offered under the NHS influenza immunisation programme to the following groups:
 - all children aged 2 to 15 (but not 16 years or older) on 31 August 2021
 - people aged 50 years or over (including those becoming age 50 years by 31 March 2022)
 - those aged from 6 months to less than 50 years of age, in a clinical risk group such as those with:
 - chronic (long-term) respiratory disease, such as asthma (requires continuous or repeated use of inhaled or systemic steroids or with previous exacerbations requiring hospital admission), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or bronchitis
 - chronic heart disease, such as heart failure
 - chronic kidney disease at stage 3, 4 or 5
 - chronic liver disease
 - chronic neurological disease, such as Parkinson's disease or motor neurone disease
 - **learning disability**
 - diabetes
 - splenic dysfunction or asplenia
 - a weakened immune system due to disease (such as HIV/AIDS) or treatment (such as cancer treatment)
 - morbidly obese (defined as BMI of 40 and above)
 - all pregnant women (including those women who become pregnant during the influenza season)
 - household contacts of immunocompromised individuals, specifically individuals who expect to share living accommodation on most days over the winter and, therefore, for whom continuing close contact is unavoidable
 - people living in long-stay residential care homes or other long-stay care facilities where rapid spread is likely to follow introduction of infection and cause high morbidity and mortality. This does not include, for instance, prisons, young offender institutions, university halls of residence, or boarding schools (except where children are of primary school age or secondary school Years 7 to 11)
 - those who are in receipt of a carer's allowance, or who are the main carer of an older or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill
 - health and social care staff, employed by a registered residential care or nursing home or registered domiciliary care provider, who are directly involved in the care of vulnerable patients or clients who are at increased risk from exposure to influenza



Access to vaccination

The Practice is legally obliged to put in reasonable adjustments to ensure equal access to healthcare services.

See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-vaccinations-for-people-with-learning-disabilities/flu-vaccinations-supporting-people-with-learning-disabilities>

Public Health England have agreed for central stocks of nasal flu vaccine (LAIV) to be used “off-label” to vaccinate patients with a needle phobia. They envisage that a person with a learning disability, who becomes extremely distressed at the sight of needles, would fall into this category. A Patient Specific Direction (PSD) will be required.

See: (this document will be updated for the 2021/22 season shortly)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/939961/Annual_national_childhood_flu_programme_2020_21_v2.pdf

Resources available



There are many resources available to assist with the advertising of the flu vaccine for your patients with learning disabilities and easy read leaflets and tools to assist in the process of desensitisation and support.

[Flu vaccination: easy-read flu vaccination resources - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-vaccination-easy-read-invitation-letter-template)

[Home - Health Publications](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-vaccination-easy-read-invitation-letter-template)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-vaccination-easy-read-invitation-letter-template>

The flu jab for people with learning disabilities awareness video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYgH181Xijs>

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/adult-social-services/easy-read-flu-info-with-nasal-spray.pdf>

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/adult-social-services/national-flu-ld-with-logos.pdf>



PROTECT

A Learning Disability Flu Vaccination

Aide Memoire

P	Prevent	Prevent the serious risks of flu to people with learning disabilities.
R	Resolve	Resolve any issues with the flu vaccine the individual or carers may have
O	Offer	Offer the nasal vaccine if needle phobia causes severe distress and is clinically appropriate
T	Time	Take the time to talk around the flu vaccine and consider a longer appointment
E	Easy read	Use easy read materials to help with your counselling and display easy read posters in the surgery
C	Contact	Consider the most appropriate way to contact the individual and their families. Would a telephone call be more appropriate than a generic SMS?
T	Together	Promote togetherness and our collective role in reducing flu circulation. "All the nurses here have had their flu vaccine; we're so happy you are joining us". Connect with the individual, the family and carers to promote vaccination and build positive relationships which will promote trust and improve healthcare for the individual going forward.

Created by Emily Chedy
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