

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release



Holderness Health urges eligible patients to protect themselves this winter by obtaining a flu vaccination

The government has announced the most comprehensive flu programme in UK history to be rolled out this winter. The expanded flu vaccination programme is part of plans to ready the NHS for the winter by preventing flu-related sickness which can cause hospitalisation. The injected flu vaccine is offered free of charge on the NHS to people who are at greatest risk. This includes people over the age of 65, pregnant women, those who have certain medical conditions, care home residents, carers and those who live with someone who is at high risk of coronavirus (on the NHS shielded patient list).

General Practices are at the forefront of this commitment and Holderness Health has been working hard behind the scenes for some months planning their local Flu campaign for 2020. Amalia Booker, CEO of Holderness Health, stated: "We strongly urge patients who meet the eligibility criteria to take up their flu vaccination this year. It will not only protect you but also your family, our community and the NHS."

The practice is expecting demand to be higher than usual and has increased its supply of vaccines to be able to meet this demand. With COVID-19 at the forefront of peoples' minds, Holderness Health has taken account of its most vulnerable patients with a plan to provide the maximum number of vaccines to eligible people whilst keeping patients and staff as safe as possible.

Sarah Powell, Head of Operations explained: "We are committed to vaccinating as many patients as we can as early as we can. We have therefore designated October as our 'flu month'. Our aim is to vaccinate 12,500 patients within the month, a task which normally takes over 4 months. Although this creates some practical challenges, we hope that patients will take advantage of this early opportunity to protect themselves and their families."

For patients who are housebound and those high-risk patients who received a letter asking them to shield during lockdown, the practice plans to visit them at home. Mrs Powell stated: "We do not want to expose these patients to any additional risks so we are going out to them. Our nursing and healthcare team will visit all the towns and villages within our catchment area and will vaccinate patients on their doorsteps. We will be letting patients know which day to expect us so that they can make arrangements to be at home. We are asking patients to have their arm at the ready to make the process as quick and easy as possible."

For patients aged 65 years and over and anyone under 65 who is classed as 'at risk', the practice is holding two weeks of flu appointments at its surgeries. The appointments will be available at Hedon (Church View Surgery), St Nicholas Surgery, Withernsea and St Patricks Surgery, Patrington and will be available from 9.30 – 5.30 on weekdays and 8.30 – 11.30 on Saturdays. These appointments will be available to book online from early September. The practice will also be proactively sending out appointments via text message to encourage attendance and ease the booking process. Anyone who is offered a time that they are unable to make should contact the practice as soon as possible to rearrange.

Dr Gary Scott, GP Partner and flu lead at Holderness Health explained how the appointments will work. "We want to reassure patients about the safety measures in place. Appointments will be slightly longer in length to allow time for our team to change PPE between patients and ensure social distancing remains in place. We ask that patients only attend at their allocated time and alone if possible. Anyone feeling unwell on the day should not attend and should instead rearrange their appointment. We will operate a one way system on all our sites so will have one door in and one door out. We have been planning for many months and ask our patients for their help and co-operation to make everything run smoothly."

Although the government has stated that people aged 50 to 64 will also be eligible for free flu vaccinations this year, General Practices nationally are still awaiting further guidance on this including how the additional vaccinations will be provided.

Ends

Notes to the Editor:

1. Full details of who should have the flu vaccine and is entitled to a free vaccine on the NHS can be accessed here: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/who-should-have-flu-vaccine/>
2. Holderness Health information for patients is available here: <https://www.withernseadoctors.co.uk/info.aspx?p=18> . This includes:
 - Patient Information Leaflet
 - Home Delivery Flu Plan
 - Flu Eligibility