

EXTRAORDINARY FLU PROTECTION 2020-21

Position statement (July 2020)

Why have we developed this position?

This extraordinary position has been developed after recognizing that 2020/21 winter may bring a unique situation and novel approaches to care for both people with diabetes and the health systems that support them.

Influenza (flu) is highly infectious. People with diabetes are more at risk of complications arising from infections including influenza and pneumonia and are more likely to need hospitalisation. The greatest risk is severe loss of diabetes control resulting in coma from either diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA) or hyperosmolar hyperglycaemic state (HSS), both of which can be fatal if left untreated.

In recent years, seasonal influenza has impacted on NHS winters pressure and in 2020/21 there is potential for this to be further increased by a resurgence of COVID-19.

Health services need to recognize the vital role they can play in protecting people with diabetes from flu and this is of particular importance this coming season.

How we have developed this position?

Our [position statement](#) on vaccinations for influenza and pneumococcal pneumonia remains the foundation for this position, however due to the impact of COVID-19, further thought was needed. We have worked with our current understanding of COVID-19, flu and RSV to inform this position. We have worked with colleagues from the European Scientific Working Group on Influenza and taken learnings from international epidemiology experts. We have collected this information and translated it into the needs of a UK setting with our clinical team and colleagues.

What are we saying?

We have always been aware that vaccination against seasonal flu is the best way to stay protected. The NHS offers free flu vaccination each season to those deemed at high risk. With potential further strains on the NHS in 2020 due to COVID-19, we believe that all people with diabetes, including children and pregnant woman, must receive this year's flu jab.

Being well protected from flu this year can prevent unnecessary hospital admissions and any further acute complications in diabetes management.

We ask that service providers of the flu jab, GP surgeries, healthcare providers and high street pharmacies, give priority to people with diabetes within an appropriate and safe environment, including the use of appropriate PPE. Pharmaceutical providers of this year's flu vaccine need to ensure availability prior to and throughout the flu season. Allowing access to the vaccine from September 2020 will ensure that the vaccine has time to work and will ensure cover right throughout the flu season.



Supported by the [European Scientific Working group for Influenza](#)