



To: Schools in South West

22 November 2019

Dear Head teacher

### **Increase in influenza outbreaks**

We are writing to inform you that influenza is beginning to circulate in certain parts of the UK. There are a large number of schools affected in the North East of the country and, over the past week, there have been several schools affected in the South West, particularly Somerset and North Somerset.

### **Immunisation**

The school immunisation programme is underway and you should already be aware of the scheduled date/s for your school. If you have any concerns please contact your school immunisation team.

The best protection against seasonal influenza is the annual influenza vaccination. All primary school children (up to and including year 6) are eligible for flu vaccination this year.

In addition, any staff with the following conditions (those in “at risk groups”) are eligible. It is worth reminding your staff of this.

People in “at risk groups” who are eligible for flu vaccine are:

- People aged 65 years and older
- Pregnant women
- People with:
  - Chronic lung disease
  - Chronic heart disease
  - Chronic kidney disease
  - Chronic liver disease
  - Chronic neurological disease
  - Immuno-suppression (whether caused by disease or treatment)
  - Diabetes mellitus
  - Morbid obesity (BMI  $\geq 40$ ).

Staff in these groups can receive influenza immunisation from their GP or pharmacy free of charge.

### **Infection prevention and control**

Maintaining a good standard of infection control practices can reduce the likelihood of acquiring influenza-like illness in your school.

On the following website you will find lots of useful information including leaflets, posters, guidance on infection control, and guidance on recognising and managing outbreaks:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/south/info-professional/public-health/infection-winter/care-guidance/>

Guidance you may find particularly useful at this time of year is:

- Checklist for flu preparedness in schools & nurseries
- Integrated Care Pathway (Checklist) for management of outbreaks of respiratory infection in schools and nurseries

People with symptoms of flu should be excluded from school until they feel recovered or 24 hours after the resolution of fever.

### **Symptoms include:**

Fever  $\geq 37.8^{\circ}\text{C}$ , muscle aches, headache and  
Cough, runny nose, sneezing, sore throat

### **Outbreak recognition and management**

An outbreak should be suspected if there are two or more people meeting the above criteria within a 48-hour period. This includes staff. If you suspect an outbreak please contact your local Health Protection Team (HPT) who can provide expert advice, support and direction.

**Tel: 0300 303 8162 Option 1 then Option 1**

Please get in touch if you have any questions.

Yours faithfully



Dr Fiona Neely  
Consultant in Health Protection  
Lead consultant for influenza