

News release

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Asthma sufferers warned of risks of flu

People with asthma and other chronic respiratory conditions are being urged by health leaders in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland to get vaccinated from flu, in order to protect themselves this winter.

People who suffer from asthma but control it well, using inhalers or following an asthma plan, often think that the flu jab isn't free for them or, as their asthma is under control, they wouldn't need it.

But flu is not just a bad cold – it can be extremely serious, even if people are already fit and healthy when they catch it. For those who already have a long term health condition such as asthma, it can be even more dangerous as the body will struggle more to fight off the illness and they are more at risk of complications such as bronchitis or pneumonia. This can lead to hospitalisation, and even death.

Figures from Public Health England* have revealed that last year in Leicestershire more than half of eligible people with chronic respiratory conditions in the area failed to have the jab leaving them vulnerable to the deadly virus.

Dr Darren Jackson, GP Clinical Lead for long term conditions at NHS West Leicestershire Clinical Commissioning Group, said:

“Many people with asthma and other respiratory conditions are used to managing their health well, but what they don't realise is that flu can hit you fast.

“Flu can be much more serious for people with asthma, even if their asthma is mild or their symptoms are well-controlled by medication. This is because people with asthma have sensitive airways, and flu can cause further inflammation of the airways and lungs. Flu in the lungs can

trigger asthma attacks and a worsening of asthma symptoms. It also can lead to pneumonia and other acute respiratory diseases.

“Unlike other medication for long-term health conditions, the flu jab is an annual one-off vaccine. The flu vaccine changes every year to fight the latest strains of flu so, even if you had a jab last winter, you need another one this year to stay protected.

“Someone with asthma who catches flu is at an increased risk of needing to be admitted to hospital and of dying, even if their asthma is mild. Having a simple flu jab can prevent this. It’s vital all those with asthma take up the free vaccine available to them to protect themselves.”

ENDS

* Source: Public Health England Seasonal Flu Vaccine Uptake (GP) 2015/16 – Data on GP Registered Patients

For more information please contact:

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Notes for editors:

West Leicestershire Clinical Commissioning Group was formed as part of the changes proposed to the NHS under the Health and Social Care Act 2012. West Leicestershire Clinical Commissioning Group represents 50 GP practices and covers Hinckley and Bosworth, North Charnwood, North West Leicestershire and South Charnwood, where it buys in many of the local health services. It was granted authorisation to act as an official NHS body from 1 April 2013, when primary care trusts were abolished. CCGs plan and purchase acute and community hospital care along with mental health care. Under the same reforms, “NHS England” the new name for the NHS Commissioning Board, purchases GP services, pharmacies, dentists, opticians and all specialised commissioning services.