

Flu Jab Crisis!?

For the majority of the patients of Woodchurch there is no crisis and we will have immunised 1000 patients over 65 year olds and 500 under 65 year olds by the end of November which sees a 10% increase on last year. There are a few who usually attend annually where there is uncertainty as supply of further stock is currently unobtainable from any of the manufacturers.

Flu is a virus that generally circulates in the winter months and is nasty. Proper flu makes you ache all over and gives you a bad chest, bad head, bad guts and usually puts you to bed for a few days. The biggest issue is usually secondary chest infections that can be very dangerous especially to people "at risk" with breathing disorders (Asthma/COPD/Obesity), heart conditions and people whose immune system is low.

There is a national mandate to target those people that are at risk under 65 years old and to immunise everyone over 65 years old (based on age at 31st March). Due to recognition that children often can spread viruses to more vulnerable people the last few years has seen a nasal flu immunisation given to children age 2-11. The government announced last month that all over 50 year olds would be entitled to a flu jab from November even if no "at risk" illness.

Over 65s vaccine has 3 strains of flu virus with a special chemical to help speed up the immunity.

Under 65s vaccine has 4 strains of flu virus.

Children have a nasal flu which has 4 strains and is given to 2 and 3 year olds/ under 18's at risk at the surgery and at school for year groups R-7.

The situation:

Every year we have to put a finger in the air and decide how many people will attend the following autumn for flu jabs and commit to an order. Last November we decided to increase this by 10%.

When we ordered these vaccines Covid 19 had never been heard of. It was also before the government announced that over 50s would all be entitled and before the Daily Mail said it was a good idea to have the flu jab. We have just about enough stock to immunise those already booked into clinic appointments but no more.

The solution:

Well, we're not quite sure yet. We have been trying to get more for the last two months since the phones went RED HOT when clinics were announced and all avenues have run dry.

It turns out that the reason have not been able to order any more is that apparently the Department for Health has requisitioned (bought) all the vaccines left from the manufacturers. I doubt Matt Hancock wants all of them for himself so expect some sort of announcement to come that they have miraculously got more vaccines and are going to protect us all. When this happens we expect to have a trickling of vaccines to be able to invite the 'at risk' groups first then the healthy over 50s.

I never knew that being at risk was so popular! I will wait in line for my flu jab.

The ask:

We're currently inviting and booking the final under 65 appointments – these will be on a first come first serve basis for 'at risk' patients. When these are full we will change our answer phone message to state this. Please consider that everyone is working really hard to get more vaccines and the uptake far exceeds any prediction that anyone could have made a year ago. When we get news of additional stock we will spread the message far and wide and very loudly.

Best wishes from all the Surgery team and thank you for all your support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jack Hickey', with a stylized, cursive script.

Jack Hickey