

Stay Well This Winter

Every year, hundreds of thousands of people see their GP and tens of thousands are hospitalised because of flu. Symptoms of flu can be very unpleasant and last for several weeks. It can lead to more serious complications like middle ear infections in children, and pneumonia or bronchitis for those with underlying health conditions, and in some cases it can be fatal.

Flu is a highly contagious illness that spreads rapidly through the population. It can cause serious complications for at risk groups, such as the elderly, expectant mothers and people with long term health conditions.

This year more children are being vaccinated because we know that they can very easily pick up germs and spread them amongst friends and family members. This vaccination programme helps protect the population.

Although it's not possible to know which strains of flu will circulate each winter, the flu vaccination is still the best protection against an unpredictable virus which can cause severe illness and deaths amongst vulnerable groups.

Throughout the last decade, there has generally been a good match between the strains of flu in the vaccine and those that subsequently circulate, so it's important that we do all we can to ensure vulnerable people are not discouraged from having flu vaccination now, or in the future.

Vaccines are available between now and March 2016, so contact your local GP or pharmacy now – it's free because you need it.

Essex County Council is backing the reminder, which is being issued by NHS England, Public Health England, the Department of Health, the NHS Trust Development Agency and Monitor.

For more information visit www.nhs.uk/staywell



**STAYWELL
THISWINTER**