

RCN position: Health care staff - Influenza vaccine

The RCN actively encourages all members to have the influenza vaccine. There is good evidence presented in 'Immunisation against infectious disease: the green book'¹. The vaccine is safe, that it helps prevent severe illness and vaccination of health care staff and carers of vulnerable groups will help stop spread.

It is inherent within the NMC code² for all registered nurses, midwives and nursing associates to take measures to protect their patients and the public as well as to protect themselves against serious illness as a professional responsibility:

- 19.3; keep to and promote recommended practice in relation to controlling and preventing infection
- 19.4; take all reasonable personal precautions necessary to avoid any potential health risks to colleagues, people receiving care and the public.

The RCN support and recommend this as best practice for all members which includes students and nursing support workers.

The RCN does not support staff or students being mandated to have the vaccine. We do not believe this will work to improve uptake. RCN workplace representatives should resist attempts by their organisation to introduce new contractual terms for new starters and/or amend existing terms and conditions requiring staff to have the vaccine. Staff need to be able to make this decision with the right information, encouragement and clear explanation of the benefit and value of the vaccine. It is imperative that all organisations, including social care organisations and educational establishments make it easy for their staff and students to get vaccinated. This approach works well and has shown to get good uptake.³

All RCN members and workplace representatives should promote the vaccine, the RCN supports organisations having a proactive approach to their staff flu vaccine campaigns, working in partnership with employers and staff side unions as appropriate, offering incentives and making sure it is easily accessible. Where individuals decide not to have the vaccine, it is ultimately their decision which the college will support. We will however, be proactive in encouraging members to have the vaccine and in promoting the benefits. Alongside having an expectation for employers to make sure the vaccine is available and that they make sure staff are given the time to have it.

¹ PHE (2020) Immunisation against infectious disease, GOV.UK. Available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immunisation-against-infectious-disease-the-green-book> (Accessed 9 July 2020).

² NMC (2018) The Code: Professional standards of practice and behaviour for nurses, midwives and nursing associates. Available at: <https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/code/> (Accessed 8 July 2020).

³ NICE (2018) Recommendations | Flu vaccination: increasing uptake | Guidance | NICE. NICE. Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng103/chapter/Recommendations#employers-of-health-and-social-care-staff> (Accessed 22 July 2020).



Further details of the RCN's annual flu campaign can be found here:

Beat the flu campaign

#BeatTheFlu.