

I am rather pathetic when it comes to having a cold. Not on the scale of “man-flu” pathetic but I tend to over-rely on various over the counter remedies, multi-vitamins, and copious amounts of energy drinks until it goes. There are five of us in my office and colds will spread quickly but I think I’ve only had proper flu once, possibly twice, and it wiped me out for days. Thankfully I was in my mid-twenties, had no underlying medical conditions and therefore recovered pretty quickly.

Unfortunately, every year England sees thousands of extra deaths in the winter as a result of cold weather and associated problems. Not only do general medical conditions rise in the cold weather but the NHS comes under increased pressure from people getting flu.

Despite my epic snowman making, last year’s winter was unseasonably mild lulling people into a false sense of security about this year’s winter forecast. Consequentially the seasonal uptake for the free flu jab has been lower than expected which unfortunately puts many people at risk. Sadly thousands of vulnerable people die from the flu each year so if you are over 65, under 65 with certain medical conditions or pregnant you are entitled to get the vaccine.

As importantly carers are entitled to get a free flu jab too. Our carers are unsung heroes in society. Every year, more than 2 million people become carers. They often miss out on vital benefits due to the complexity of the system. But every year carers save the country millions of pounds by keeping their loved ones out of the statutory system. It is essential that their own health and well-being is catered for, so if you are a carer the free flu jab is available to you too.

Winter can be a beautiful time of year but it is sadly also the most deadly. We can help protect the most vulnerable, and, in relation to carers, valuable people in society by spreading the word that free flu vaccines are available and encourage them to go get one and keep themselves healthy this winter.