

We have received information from the Health Protection Agency regarding influenza-like illness. As I am sure you are aware that an influenza-like illness is circulating in the local area/across the South West.

Most cases of flu can be treated effectively at home. We have been advised to encourage patients to self-care, seek advice on treating symptoms via reputable on line resources such as NHS Choices, or to seek advice from a local Pharmacist before contacting the GP.

Patients should be advised to:

- rest and sleep.
  - keep warm.
  - take paracetamol or ibuprofen (unless otherwise contraindicated) to lower your temperature and treat aches and pains.
  - drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration
- (More info for patients can be found on <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/flu> or via 111)

Patients who have severe/prolonged flu or other complicating factors particularly children, pregnant women, those with chronic conditions and the elderly (or where symptoms have not improved after 7 days) should contact the surgery.

### **The community**

Influenza is most infectious when symptoms start until about 3-5 days later, therefore, patients should be advised to avoid attending the practice or a healthcare setting while symptomatic, if at all possible.

Anyone with symptoms of flu should be advised to stay away from work/school until they have recovered and for at least 24 hours after the resolution of any fever. There are no recommended times for exclusion from school for an infected child; a child should return when they have recovered.

There are still opportunities to protect eligible patients through vaccination and as a practice we have managed to secure further vaccine for eligible patients. The seasonal flu immunisation programme runs until March each year so please contact the surgery as soon as possible if you are eligible and have not had the vaccine.