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Subject: NCC NEWS RELEASE : Are you pregnant? Protect yourself and your unborn baby from flu complications

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For Immediate Release

Are you pregnant? Protect yourself and your unborn baby from flu complications

Influenza, commonly known as flu, is a highly infectious viral illness which can lead to complications, hospital admission and in some cases even death.

There is strong evidence that pregnant women have a much higher risk of serious illness as a result of flu compared with the general population. They are four times more likely to develop serious illness and up to five times more likely to be admitted to hospital compared with the general population. The risks are highest in the last three months of pregnancy. Babies born to women who have had flu are up to four times more likely to be born prematurely and to have a low birth weight. Flu in pregnancy can even lead to stillbirth or death in the first week of life.

Vaccination against flu reduces these risks. It transfers flu antibodies to the baby and gives the baby some protection against flu for the first few months of life.

Lucy Wightman, Director of Public Health in Northamptonshire said:

“The flu vaccination is the best protection against flu and, contrary to popular belief, it does not give you flu. It’s safe during any stage of pregnancy, from the first few weeks through to the woman’s due date and doesn’t carry any risks for mother or baby.”

The flu vaccine can safely be given to pregnant women at the same time as the pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine.

Sarah Harvey, a resident of Northamptonshire said:

“It’s important for me to protect my unborn baby against flu. I know the complications of flu can be worse during pregnancy so I made sure I had my vaccination to protect my baby from infection. It was a really easy process and I had no problems at all. I also have a 2 year old son and he had the nasal spray at the same time, which protects him too. I urge other pregnant women to go and receive their vaccine and protect themselves and their babies from flu infection.”

Last winter, only 41% of the pregnant women received a flu vaccination in Northamptonshire. Public Health Northamptonshire, Nene and Corby CCGs and Kettering and Northampton General Hospitals are encouraging high-risk patients, including pregnant women, to get their free flu vaccination and stay protected from the virus.

If you're pregnant speak to your midwife, GP or pharmacist to arrange for your free flu vaccination. Any more details can be obtained from: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/flu-jab-vaccine-pregnant/>

Notes to editors

You are eligible to receive a free flu jab if you:

- are 65 years of age or over
- are pregnant
- have certain medical conditions and under 65 years of age
- are living in a long-stay residential care home or other long-stay care facility
- Receive a carer's allowance, or you are the main carer for an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if you fall ill.
- Child age 2-10 years
- the frontline social care workers employed by a: registered residential care or nursing home; registered homecare organisation; hospice and personal assistants paid through personal budget scheme

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