

TEEN VAPING ASCENT

A special report looking at the rise in vaping among young non-smokers [page 6](#)



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Returning with a vengeance

As we enter the first winter after the Covid-19 pandemic, studies indicate that this flu season could be much worse than in previous years. [Millie Browning](#) reports

SPECIAL REPORT

Calls for people to get their annual flu vaccination have increased in the last few weeks amid warnings that flu could strike earlier this year and be "much worse than the previous two years".

These claims come as the World Health Organization (WHO) predicted a surge in Covid-19 and influenza patients as winter approaches. Dr Hans Kluge, WHO's regional director for Europe warned: "With autumn and winter approaching, we anticipate a surge in [Covid-19] cases with or without a resurgence of seasonal influenza in Europe."

"We can't speak with any certainty because each region and each country have its own specificities," added Dr Catherine Smallwood, WHO Europe's senior emergency officer. "But we have looked quite closely at the flu season in the southern hemisphere. Looking at countries such as Australia, where they

saw – quite early on – a sharp increase in influenza in the season that did contribute to some pressures on health systems."

Preparing for winter

Amid an increasing cost-of-living crisis, the Government announced last month that everyone over-50 or considered to be vulnerable will be offered a free flu jab, as well as school children in years seven to nine. "When offered people need to get their winter flu jab as soon as possible, and the same for the Covid booster," said Professor Matt Keeling, epidemiologist at Warwick University and a member of the Government's advisory group Sage.

Professor Keeling added that Covid-19 measures, including mask wearing, had reduced flu in previous years.

"This means that there is probably slightly less immunity in the population than in 'normal' years," he said. "Although the extended vaccination programme last year will help mitigate some of this."

Dr Smallwood also warned that because of a lack of preventative measures, individuals and healthcare professionals must be more vigilant than ever. "There will likely be an interplay between the different viruses," she said. "So, we need to be really agile in our response and be ready to respond to any changes in the virus circulation."



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The Professional Assistant:

Erectile dysfunction

This month's module focuses on erectile dysfunction and examines the different mental and physical causes of the condition, as well as the treatment options pharmacy staff can offer customers.

SUPPORTING learning IN PHARMACY

Technician Matters

This month's CPD module (page 34) looks at Covid-19 and influenza. Page 36 features our final module in our enhancing your professional practice series in conjunction with CPPE, while page 33 brings you the latest news and insight.

