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To: All Branches

H3N2 “super flu” infection risk

Dear Colleagues,

The UK is currently facing an unprecedented flu season that is putting immense pressure on hospitals, schools and workplaces.

Health authorities have cautioned that a 'drifted' flu variant, designated as H3N2 – (or subclade K) has quickly emerged as the dominant influenza strain right across the UK. The H3N2 subtype represents one of three primary viruses responsible for seasonal flu.

Symptoms include high-temperatures, coughing, loss of appetite, feeling tired and weak, muscle aches and joint pains. In more severe cases the virus can cause pneumonia and can be fatal to individuals with compromised immune systems.

We are therefore encouraging CWU health and safety reps to engage with employers to protect members by aiming to prevent transmission in workplaces by drawing on principles learned from Covid-19 risk assessments and established public health guidance on respiratory infection control. Some suggested actions may include some or all of the following:

- Reviewing ventilation in shared spaces.
- Promoting better fresh air circulation wherever possible (dilution ventilation).
- Reviewing hand-washing facilities and hand sanitiser supply.
- Allowing colleagues to wear face masks in close or crowded indoor settings if they choose.
- Reviewing and updating local risk assessments to include flu.
- Identifying any high-risk workplace areas.
- Discussing and agreeing mitigation measures and review their effectiveness weekly.
- Requesting information regarding sickness absence and emerging risk areas.
- Ensuring there is clear communication to workers about symptoms and reporting.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is urging all eligible people to ensure they are vaccinated in the lead up to Christmas as rates of flu continue to rise week-on-week.

[Last chance to get vaccinated before Christmas as flu cases rise - GOV.UK](#)

Self-protection routines and good practice learned during the Covid 19 outbreak can equally be applied during this unprecedented flu season such as:

- Washing hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
- Cough into your bent elbow or use a tissue and dispose of it safely.
- Ensuring shared surfaces are clean and wiped down regularly.
- Adopt safe distancing whenever practicable.

[How to avoid catching flu, COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses this winter – UK Health Security Agency](#)

People who are at higher risk from respiratory infections such as Flu include:

- Older people.
- Those who are pregnant.
- Those who are unvaccinated.
- People of any age whose immune systems mean they are at higher risk of serious illness, or those with known about health vulnerability.

Further regular updates on public information advice and infection rates can be accessed via the website links shown below.

[NHS England » NHS facing 'worst case scenario' December amid 'super flu' surge](#)

[Flu activity continues to increase in Scotland - News - Public Health Scotland](#)

[Flu | nidirect](#) [Flu vaccine | nidirect](#)

[Weekly Influenza and Acute Respiratory Infection Report - Public Health Wales](#)

CWU engagement via local workplace health and safety committees is encouraged wherever possible, with primary focus on risk assessments and local risk control for workplaces and vulnerable colleagues as necessary.

This LTB is shared on behalf of CWU Central Services.

If you have any questions or need any further information, please contact:

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