Guidance on Covid-19 and Flu Vaccinations for People with Lymphoedema

This document replaces the BLS and LSN Consensus on Covid -19 vaccination for patients with lymphoedema, issued in May 2021. This version provides guidance on flu vaccinations and Covid-19 boosters, which may be administered together.

Where should I receive a vaccine injection if I have lymphoedema?

The BLS recommends that vaccination into an area of swollen tissue (lymphoedema), regardless of the cause, is avoided, where possible, as the locally impaired function of the lymphatic system may make the vaccine less effective. Avoidance of the affected area may also reduce any potential risk of increased swelling and infection (cellulitis) generated by skin puncture from the needle of the injection.

The following guidance serves to help select the most appropriate area of the body for vaccination:

• If you have had lymph nodes removed from the axilla (armpit) of one arm, vaccines should be given in the unaffected, opposite arm.

• If you have one arm affected by lymphoedema, vaccines should be given in the unaffected, opposite arm.

• If both arms are affected by lymphoedema, but not the legs, vaccines should be given into one of the thighs.

• If both arms and one leg are affected by lymphoedema, vaccines should be given into the unaffected thigh.

• If both arms and both legs are affected by lymphoedema, vaccines should be given into the limb least affected by lymphoedema.

- If you are receiving both vaccinations / boosters at the same time, they may usually be given in the same unaffected limb, at least 2.5cm (1 inch) apart, without any ill effects. Some strains of flu vaccination are best given on a separate site, but the healthcare professional administering the vaccinations will know this and advise the use of two separate sites, in which case you may request to have each injection on a different unaffected limb. Alternatively, you may request one of the vaccines to be given at a different appointment. There is no recommended time interval between two vaccinations.

How do I find out if I need, or am eligible for a Covid or flu vaccine booster?

Check if you need a vaccine by going on the following websites:

England and Wales: **https://healthmedia.blog.gov.uk/2023/08/08/covid-autumn-booster-vaccine-2023-everything-you-need-to-know/**

Scotland: **https://publichealthscotland.scot/news/2023/august/winter-flu-and-covid-19-vaccination-programme/**

Northern Ireland: https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/get-covid-19-vaccination-northern-ireland#toc-0

What if I am still uncertain?

Seek advice from your GP (General Practitioner). Your GP and / or the staff of the surgery will be able to provide advice over the telephone or direct you to information contained on their website

Further information, please contact

https://www.thebls.com/ https://www.lymphoedema.org/

admin@thebls.com admin@lsn.org.uk