

### **What is the flu virus and why vaccinate the deploying element?**

Military personnel are predominantly young and fit and flu symptoms such as fever, chills, headache and aching muscles would normally result in a 'man down' scenario that lasts around 7–10 days. However, the flu virus is **highly contagious** and spreads easily from person to person via coughs and sneezes and from touching infected items. Living conditions in theatre can contribute to a more rapid spread through lowered immunological resistance and close proximity living. Flu in theatre can quickly progress from '**Man Down**' to '**Section Down**' and this can seriously affect operational capability.

### **How do I get the vaccine?**

Every year circulating flu viruses are studied to identify the three most likely to cause problems and the specific vaccine component is produced accordingly. The 2011/12 flu vaccine is expected to be available from 12 Sep 11 and around 3,000 troops will be leaving BFG in that first month. To enable the BFG Health Service to fulfil the order to offer immunisation **prior to deployment**, it will present a significant challenge for both the BFG Health Service and the Units. Units will brief personnel on the flu vaccine requirements and will advise personnel of the arrangements. Medical Centres, with support from 1 Med Regt, are pooling resources to ensure sufficient clinical capability will be available to deliver the vaccination programme with minimal disruption to individuals.

### **What if my deployment date is before 12 Sep 11?**

For those deploying prior to vaccine availability, the vaccine will be available in theatre. However, it is not acceptable to expect vaccination in theatre if your arrival in theatre is after 12 Sep.

### **Are there any side effects from the vaccine?**

The flu vaccine is the same vaccine used in the NHS seasonal flu campaign and is used routinely in people with chronic health problems. Like any vaccine there is a small risk of local reaction or allergic response. Some individuals may develop flu like symptoms following vaccination, however, the flu vaccination is not a live vaccine and therefore cannot cause Flu.

**Seasonal flu vaccine for the 'at risk' groups (non-deploying element) will be released from the manufacturers in early Oct and BFGHS will deliver in line with the UK campaign and the DoH recommendations. Further information on how 'at risk' groups can protect themselves and their families will be available shortly.**