

[Press release: Foreign Office Minister Mark Field visits South Korea](#)

FCO Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific, Mark Field, arrived in South Korea today (4 January) to further strengthen UK-Korea relations. The visit will focus on advancing trade links and discussing regional and international global interests.

Minister Field will start his visit in the capital, Seoul, before taking in Korea's second city, Busan, and the city of Ulsan, a leading industrial hub.

While in South Korea, Mark Field will meet key Korean figures including Vice Foreign Minister, Cho Hyun, and the Mayor of Ulsan and Vice Mayor of Busan.

Minister for Asia and the Pacific, Mark Field, said:

"I am proud to say that this is my third visit to South Korea since 2017 which shows mine and the UK government's commitment to the UK-South Korea relationship. It is a long and enduring relationship and as we leave the EU, we are determined to build on our ties with regional powers like South Korea."

"UK-Korea trade is worth almost £14bn a year and has huge potential to grow still further, in particular in renewable energy sectors such as offshore wind. The UK and Korea have also long stood shoulder-to-shoulder to defend our shared values – including during the Korean War – and our cooperation will be important for the continued security and stability of the region and the world."

The Minister will also meet representatives from British businesses operating in South Korea and members of the British community in Busan.

Further information

[News story: UK flu levels according to PHE statistics: 2018 to 2019](#)

Latest update

The latest [Public Health England \(PHE\) flu report](#) published at 2pm today, Thursday 28 March 2019, shows that seasonal flu continues to circulate across the UK and activity in primary care continues to decrease.

GP consultations with flu-like illness rates are similar to the previous week at 7.2 per 100,000. Hospital admissions due to flu has decreased from 1.51 per 100,000 to 1.18 per 100,000 and for ICU admissions is similar at 0.08 per 100,000 compared to 0.09 per 100,000 the previous week.

The report also shows that in week 12, 2019 no statistically significant excess all-cause mortality by week of death has been seen yet overall or by age group in England this season.

Previous updates

Thursday 21 March 2019

The latest [Public Health England \(PHE\) flu report](#) published at 2pm today, Thursday 21 March 2019, shows that seasonal flu continues to circulate across the UK, although the good news is that activity in primary care continues to decrease.

GP consultations with flu-like illness have decreased from 9.1 per 100,000 to 6.2 per 100,000, with hospital flu admissions at 1.56 per 100,000 similar to 1.52 per 100,000 the previous week. Intensive care flu admission rates have also decreased compared last week (0.09 per 100,000 compared to 0.20 per 100,000 in England).

The report also shows that in week 11, 2019 no statistically significant excess all-cause mortality by week of death has been seen yet overall or by age group in England this season.

Thursday 14 March 2019

The latest [Public Health England \(PHE\) flu report](#) published at 2pm today, Thursday 14 March 2019, shows that seasonal flu continues to circulate across the UK, although the good news is that activity in primary care continues to decrease.

GP consultations with flu-like illness and hospital flu admission rates have both decreased from 12.1 per 100,000 to 9.1 per 100,000 and 2.1 per 100,000 to 1.55 per 100,000 respectively. Intensive care flu admission rates have also decreased compared last week (0.19 per 100,000 compared to 0.24 per 100,000 in England).

The report also shows that in week 10, 2019 no statistically significant excess all-cause mortality by week of death has been seen yet overall or by age group in England this season.

Thursday 7 March 2019

The [latest Public Health England \(PHE\) flu report](#) published at 2pm today, Thursday 7 March 2019, shows that seasonal flu continues to circulate across the UK, although the good news is that activity in primary care is decreasing.

GP consultations with flu-like illness and hospital flu admission rates have both decreased from 15.7 per 100,000 to 12.1 per 100,000 and 4.15 per 100,000 to 1.93 per 100,000 respectively. Intensive care flu admission rates have also decreased compared last week (0.23 per 100,000 compared to 0.4 per 100,000 in England).

The report also shows that in week 9, 2019 no statistically significant excess all-cause mortality by week of death has been seen yet overall or by age group in England this season.

Dr Richard Pebody, Head of Flu at Public Health England said:

The good news is that flu is now decreasing, though still circulating.

To prevent the spread of flu, it is important to practice good respiratory and hand hygiene and to avoid close contact with others if you have flu symptoms.

Thursday 28 February 2019

The latest Public Health England (PHE) report published at 2pm today, Thursday 28 February 2019, shows that [seasonal flu continues to circulate across the UK](#).

GP consultations with flu-like illness and hospital flu admission rates have both decreased from 21.1 per 100,000 to 15.7 per 100,000 and 5.9 per 100,000 to 4.1 per 100,000 respectively. Intensive care flu admission rates have also decreased compared last week (0.37 per 100,000 compared to 0.54 per 100,000 in England).

The report also shows that in week 8, 2019 no statistically significant excess all-cause mortality by week of death has been seen yet overall or by age group in England this season.

Dr Richard Pebody, Head of Flu at PHE said:

There is still widespread circulation of flu across the country. To prevent the spread of flu, it is important to practice good respiratory and hand hygiene and to avoid close contact with others if you have flu symptoms.

Thursday 21 February 2019

The latest PHE report published at 2pm today, Thursday 21 February 2019, shows that seasonal flu continues to circulate across the UK.

GP consultations with flu-like illness and hospital admission rates have both decreased slightly from 23.1 per 100,000 to 21.1 per 100,000 and 6.86 per

100,000 to 5.97 per 100,000 respectively. Intensive care admission rates have also slightly decreased compared last week (0.49 per 100,000 compared to 0.55 per 100,000).

The report also shows that in week 07, 2019 no statistically significant excess all-cause mortality by week of death has been seen yet overall or by age group in England this season.

Dr Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunisations at Public Health England said:

It's normal for levels of flu-like illness to fluctuate by small amounts at this point in the season. Flu is an unpredictable virus, but the overall trend is fairly stable.

Thursday 14 February 2019

The latest Public Health England (PHE) [report published at 2pm today, Thursday 14 February 2019](#), shows that seasonal flu continues to circulate across the UK.

GP consultations with flu-like illness and hospital admission rates have both increased slightly from 19.7 per 100,000 to 23.1 per 100,000 and 6.05 per 100,000 to 6.75 per 100,000 respectively. Intensive care admission rates remain at similar levels to last week (0.52 per 100,000).

The report also shows that in week 06, 2019 no statistically significant excess all-cause mortality by week of death has been seen yet overall or by age group in England this season.

Dr Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunisations at Public Health England said:

It's normal for levels of flu-like illness to fluctuate by small amounts at this point in the season. Flu is an unpredictable virus, but the overall trend is fairly stable.

Thursday 7 February 2019

The latest PHE [report published at 2pm today, Thursday 7 February 2019](#), shows that seasonal flu continues to circulate across the UK.

GP consultations with flu-like illness have increased slightly from 17.5 per 100,000 to 19.7, while intensive care and hospital admission rates remain at similar levels to last week (0.56 per 100,000 and 5.92 per 100,000 respectively).

The report also shows that in week 5, 2019, no statistically significant excess all-cause mortality by week of death has been seen yet overall or by age group in England this season.

Richard Pebody, Head of Flu at PHE said:

A(H1N1)pdm09 continues to be the main circulating strain, which is well matched to the strains in this year's flu vaccines.

To prevent the spread of flu, it is important to practice good respiratory and hand hygiene, and to avoid close contact with others if you have flu symptoms.

Thursday 31 January 2019

The latest Public Health England (PHE) [report published at 2pm today, Thursday 31 January 2019](#), shows that seasonal flu continues to circulate across the UK, with early signs that activity is starting to peak.

GP consultations with flu-like illness have reduced from 19.6 per 100,000 to 17.5, while intensive care admission rates remain at similar levels to last week (0.56 from 0.57 per 100,000) and there has been a slight increase in hospital admissions rates from 5.12 to 6.11 per 100,000.

The report also shows that in week 4, 2019 no statistically significant excess all-cause mortality by week of death has been seen yet overall or by age group in England this season.

Richard Pebody, Head of Flu at PHE said:

Flu continues to circulate although there are early signs that activity is peaking.

To prevent the spread of flu, it is important to practice good respiratory and hand hygiene and to avoid close contact with others if you have flu symptoms.

Thursday 24 January 2019

The latest PHE [report published at 2pm today, Thursday 24 January 2019](#), shows that seasonal flu continues to circulate across the UK, with early signs that activity is starting to peak.

GP consultations with flu-like illness and intensive care admission rates remain at similar levels to last week (19.6 from 19.2 per 100,000 in England and 0.54 from 0.55 per 100,000 respectively), while there has been a slight increase in hospital admissions rates from 4.8 to 5.04 per 100,000.

The report also shows that in week 3, 2019 no statistically significant excess all-cause mortality by week of death has been seen yet overall or by age group in England this season.

Richard Pebody, Head of Flu at Public Health England said:

We are continuing to see flu circulate, with early signs that activity is peaking. The main circulating strain remains as A(H1N1)pdm09, which is well matched to the strains in this year's flu vaccines.

It is important to practice good respiratory and hand hygiene and to get the vaccine if you are eligible, although we are now coming to the end of the vaccine season.

Thursday 17 January 2019

The [latest PHE report published at 2pm today \(17 January 2019\)](#), shows that seasonal flu is circulating in the community but remains at low levels.

The statistics show that over the last week, GP consultations with flu-like illness, hospital and intensive care admission rates have all increased from 14.8 to 19.2 per 100,000, from 3.54 to 4.75 and from 0.42 to 0.50 per 100,000 respectively – suggesting flu is having a moderate impact on hospital admissions, and a high impact on intensive care unit and high dependency unit admissions.

The report also shows that in week 2, 2019, no statistically significant excess all-cause mortality by week of death has been seen yet overall or by age group in England this season.

Richard Pebody, Head of Flu at PHE said:

In the last week, there have been small increases to both hospital and intensive care admission rates meaning flu is starting to have a greater impact. These rises are typical for this time of year.

We are currently seeing mainly A(H1N1)pdm09 circulating which is well matched to the strains in this year's flu vaccines.

Previous flu seasons suggest this strain particularly affects children, pregnant women, and adults with long term conditions – so if you're eligible, it's not too late to get your free jab to protect yourself and vulnerable people around you.

Thursday 10 January 2019

The [latest PHE report published at 2pm today \(10 January 2019\)](#), shows that seasonal flu is now circulating in the community but remains at low levels.

The statistics show that over the last week, GP consultations with flu-like illness, hospital and intensive care admission rates have all increased from 8.4 to 14.8 per 100,000, from 1.96 to 4.32 and from 0.32 to 0.40 per 100,000 respectively – suggesting flu is having a moderate impact on hospital admissions as well as intensive care unit and high dependency unit admissions.

The report also shows that in week 1, 2019, no statistically significant excess all-cause mortality by week of death has been seen yet overall or by age group in England this season.

Richard Pebody, Head of Flu at PHE said:

In the last week, the flu indicators we track have reached low levels, meaning flu is now circulating in the community in England.

We are currently seeing mainly A(H1N1)pdm09 circulating which is well matched to the strains in this year's flu vaccines.

The best form of protection against flu is to get the vaccine if you are eligible and to practice good respiratory and hand hygiene. It isn't too late to get the flu vaccine so make sure you take up the offer if you're eligible, to protect yourself and vulnerable people around you.

Thursday 3 January 2019

The [PHE report published at 2pm on 3 January 2019](#) suggests that influenza is starting to circulate in the community and is at moderate levels. The statistics show that over the last week, the flu hospitalisation and intensive care admission rates have both increased from 1.06 to 1.96 per 100,000, and from 0.19 to 0.29 per 100,000 respectively.

The GP consultation rate with flu-like illness has remained similar to the previous week, at 8.4 per 100,000. However, these levels are as we would expect at this time of year.

The main subtype circulating is influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, which is well matched to the strain included in this season's vaccine. No statistically significant excess all-cause mortality by week of death has been seen yet overall or by age group in England this season.

Richard Pebody, Head of Flu at PHE said:

We have seen a rise in several of the flu indicators we track in the last week which suggests flu is now circulating in the community in England.

This year, we've offered a more effective 'adjuvanted' vaccine to those aged 65 years and over; a 'quadrivalent' vaccine, which helps protect against four strains of flu, to those aged 18 to 64 with underlying health conditions, and further roll-out of the nasal spray vaccine to an extra school year, as part of the children's flu vaccine programme.

Uptake of the flu vaccine in pre-school age children is at its highest ever level, and rates of vaccination among eligible adults

are similar to recent seasons. We are currently seeing mainly A(H1N1)pdm09 circulating which is well matched to the strains in this year's flu vaccines.

The best form of protection against flu is to get the vaccine if you are eligible and to practice good respiratory and hand hygiene.

The flu virus can live for many hours on hard surfaces, and therefore practising good hand hygiene can limit the spread of germs and transmission of flu.

People with flu-like symptoms are advised to catch coughs and sneezes in a tissue, bin it, and then wash their hands afterwards with soap and warm water to kill the germs. Practising good hand hygiene and giving eligible people the flu vaccine is the best defence against the virus.

People should frequently clean used surfaces to stop the spread of flu. Avoid having unnecessary contact with other people if you or they have symptoms of flu. Seasonal flu usually circulates for several weeks each year.

The intensity of circulation depends upon the underlying population immunity, the circulating viruses and external factors such as the weather. It is an unpredictable virus and it is not possible to anticipate how flu levels will progress.

Amongst other diseases like norovirus that normally increase during winter, seasonal flu puts extra pressure on the NHS every year.

The [weekly national flu reports](#) track seasonal flu and other seasonal respiratory illnesses in the UK. Currently, 69.7% of adults over 65, 44.7% of adults with a long-term health condition, 43.6% of pregnant women, 43.0% of 3-year-olds, 41.5% of 2-year-olds and 61.0% of healthcare workers have received the vaccine.

[News story: World-leading innovations in UK aerospace: ideas for funding](#)

Organisations can submit an express an interest with their ideas for innovative aerospace design and manufacture.

There is up to £150 million available across the year in a series of regular calls. The best applications will then be invited to apply for grant funding.

The investment is part of a £3.9 billion programme between government and industry that aims to maintain and grow the UK's leading position in civil aerospace.

Innovate UK works with the [Aerospace Technology Institute](#) (ATI) and the [Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy](#) to coordinate and manage the programme.

A more competitive aerospace industry

Funding in this competition is for industry-led research or capital investment projects.

Projects should look to:

- strengthen whole-aircraft design and system integration in the UK
- build smart, connected technologies and more electrified aircraft
- develop the UK as a global leader in large, complex aviation structures, especially wings
- develop new propulsion technologies, for example, large turbofans

Competition information

- the competition opens on 7 January 2019, and the deadline for expressions of interest is at midday on 23 January 2019
- depending on the project type, UK-based business, research and technology organisations and academic organisations can be the lead
- businesses could attract up to 70% of their eligible project costs
- applicants must sign up to the ATI [framework agreement](#)
- projects need to demonstrate that their expected costs and timescales are in proportion with their objectives

[News story: Near miss with track workers at Sundon](#)

At around 23:50 hrs on 12 December 2018, two track workers had to jump out of the way of an approaching passenger train that was travelling at 101 mph (162 km/h). Neither person was injured.

We have undertaken a [preliminary examination](#) into the circumstances surrounding this incident. Having assessed the evidence which has been gathered to date, we have decided to publish a [safety digest](#).

The safety digest will be made available on our website in the next few weeks.

[Press release: Irbesartan blood pressure and heart medication recalled from pharmacies by MHRA](#)

Today the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) are recalling certain irbesartan containing products made by Actavis (now Accord) as a precautionary measure, due to possible N-nitrosodiethylamine (NDEA) contamination.

There is no evidence at present that the impurity has caused any harm to patients and not all irbesartan products are affected. People should not stop their medication and should speak to a doctor or pharmacist if they have any concerns.

The recall follows a Europe-wide investigation into contamination of sartan products. MHRA twice recalled batches of valsartan to pharmacy level in 2018; valsartan containing medicines from Dexcel and Actavis (now Accord) were recalled [in July](#) and batches of valsartan containing medicines made by Mylan and Teva, were also recalled to pharmacy level [in November](#).

The first recall occurred after an impurity, N-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA), was identified as part of the manufacturing process in a valsartan active substance manufactured at one facility based in China. A second impurity, NDEA, was later discovered.

MHRA are working closely with other EU member states, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines (EDQM) to ensure a thorough investigation and we will consider the impact in the UK and what actions may be necessary.

Dr Sam Atkinson MHRA's Director of the Inspection, Enforcement and Standards Division said:

Our highest priority is making sure the medicines you take are safe.

Our investigation into potential contamination of sartan containing medicines, including irbesartan, is ongoing.

At present, there is no evidence that medicines containing NDMA or NDEA have caused any harm to patients.

Because of the risk associated with suddenly stopping high blood pressure medication, people are advised not to stop any treatments without consulting their doctor or pharmacist.

Notes to editor

1. [In July, MHRA advised pharmacies](#) to recall affected batches of Valsartan containing medicines made by Mylan and Teva as a precautionary measure.
2. [In November, we advised pharmacies](#) to recall batches of valsartan from Dexcel and Actavis as a precautionary measure.
3. Find out more about our [Yellow Card Scheme](#).
4. Read the [Drug Alert in full](#) for further information.