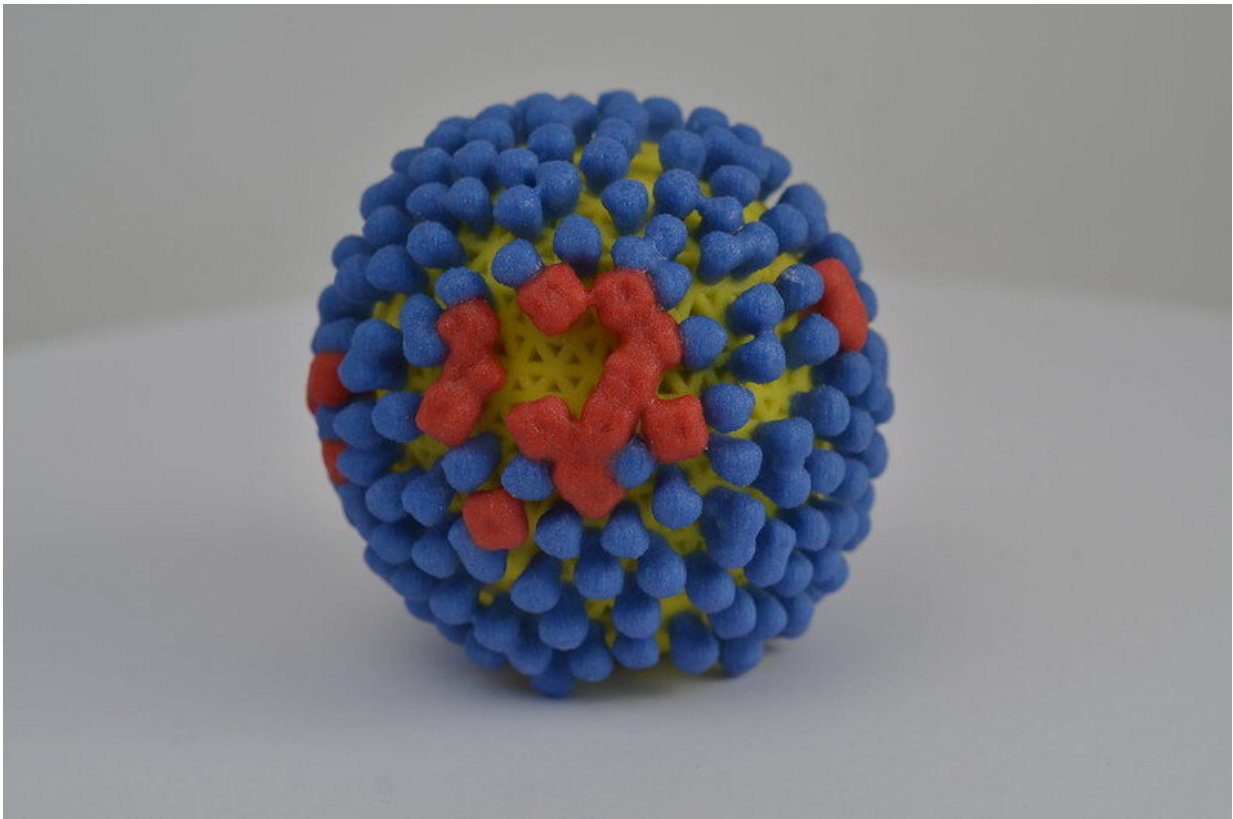


# Concerns rise over UK flu outbreak amid vaccine delays

September 4 2021, by Pan Pylas

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3D print of influenza virus. The virus surface (yellow) is covered with proteins called hemagglutinin (blue) and neuraminidase (red) that enable the virus to enter and infect human cells. Credit: NIH

One of the U.K.'s largest suppliers of seasonal influenza vaccines warned Saturday that there could be delivery delays of up to two weeks as a

result of a shortage of truck drivers.

In a statement that has accentuated concerns about the potential scale of this winter's [flu outbreak](#), [vaccine company](#) Seqirus blamed "unforeseen challenges linked with road freight delays" for the disruption to deliveries in England and Wales.

The company said it "is working hard to resolve the delay to allow customers to reschedule their [influenza](#) vaccination clinics."

Though the severity of flu outbreaks vary each year, there are concerns that past lockdowns put in place to combat the coronavirus pandemic might make U.K. residents more susceptible to the flu in the coming months.

"Clearly influenza immunization this year is really important, and the reason it's so important is because of lockdowns, we've had very low circulating influenza levels last winter," Oxford University professor Anthony Harnden said. He is deputy chairman of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, which advises the British government on the rollout of vaccines.

"So we do know when there are low circulating influenza levels the year before, often we get high infection rates in the following year so it's quite possible that we'll have a high instance of influenza this year," Harnden told the BBC.

Dr. Richard Vautrey, the chair of the British Medical Association's General Practitioners Committee, said any shortage of flu vaccines is likely to affect a "significant proportion" of local practices and warned of a "serious impact" on GPs and patients.

Free flu vaccines will be available to more than 35 million people this

winter, including all [secondary school students](#), according to the government.

Companies in a variety of industries have reported delivery disruptions due to a truck driver shortage, which has been blamed on an array of factors.

A major reason is that drivers from European Union countries returned to the continent as a result of Britain's departure from the EU and the coronavirus pandemic.

Among the many companies struggling to maintain stock levels are pub company JD Wetherspoon, whose founder was an ardent supporter of Brexit, and fast-food chains KFC, McDonald's and Nando's.

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