



Date: 28th September 2023

Circular Number: NCO-37-2023

Re: COVID-19 and Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme Autumn Winter 2023/2024

Dear Pharmacist,

I refer to Circular NCO-34-2023, dated 24th August 2023, which outlines plans for the COVID-19 and Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme for the upcoming season.

The autumn / winter campaign commences on 2nd October 2023.

Vaccines & Ordering

- The COVID-19 vaccine which will be used for the Autumn / Winter Booster campaign is Comirnaty® XBB.1.5.
- The Comirnaty® XBB.1.5 adapted vaccine can ONLY be used for booster vaccinations.
- Comirnaty® BA.4-5 vaccine is still available to order for use as a primary vaccination in those who have not yet received a primary course of COVID-19 vaccine.
- All COVID-19 and flu vaccines can be ordered online from <https://www.ordervaccines.ie/>. Fortnightly deliveries are in progress since 18th September 2023 as per your delivery calendar.
- Any expired stock should be returned to NCCS using the normal process – see <https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/hcpinfo/vaccineordering/vaccreturn.pdf>

For any queries relating to vaccine allocations, orders or deliveries, please contact NCCS customer services at: vaccines@udd.ie or 01 4637770.



Clinical Information for Vaccinators

An extensive range of materials to support vaccinators has been developed by the National Immunisation Office. All vaccinators should be familiar with the updated training and guidance documentation before commencing vaccination, which can be found at the following links:

Vaccine Information for Health Professionals <https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/hcpinfo/>

Immunisation Bulletins <https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/infomaterials/newsletter/>

Influenza Vaccination Programme 2023/24 [pharmacy-flu-letter-2023.pdf \(hse.ie\)](#)

Table of recommended groups for COVID-19 autumn booster and flu vaccine <https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/hcpinfo/covid19vaccineinfo4hps/table-of-recommended-groups-for-covid19-autumn-booster-and-flu-vaccine.pdf>

HSeLanD <https://www.hseland.ie/dash/Account/Login>

For any clinical queries please contact immunisation@hse.ie.

Vaccination Primary Care Contractors Programme Webpage

We have launched a new webpage which includes information for Community Pharmacies participating in the COVID-19 and flu vaccination programmes. Please visit:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/gmscontracts/vaccination-primary-care-contractors-programme/>

Operational Guidance

The Operational Guidance for Vaccination in Community Pharmacies has been updated and circulated via Healthmail, and is also available to view or download on the Pharmacy section of our webpage.

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/gmscontracts/vaccination-primary-care-contractors-programme/information-for-community-pharmacies/>



Children's LAIV (Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine) Programme

The primary pathway for provision of children's flu vaccine is still through GPs and Community Pharmacies. In addition, HSE mobile vaccination teams are providing children's LAIV on-site in schools for senior infants in primary schools and eligible children in primary age special schools.

Community Pharmacists may also arrange with local primary schools to provide on-site vaccinations to children in other year groups, the LAIV toolkit can be accessed at:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/hcpinfo/fluinfo/>. If your practice is providing LAIV to children in primary schools, please ensure to enter the vaccination records promptly to avoid another vaccine being administered in error by a different provider.

Recording Vaccines

To ensure the patient vaccination record is correct, take a moment to check the information entered into HSE PharmaVax. In particular:

- Take care when running combined flu and COVID-19 clinics, to ensure that the records entered for each patient are correct and reflect the vaccine(s) administered, particularly if only 1 vaccine was administered.
- Check that the correct dose is recorded, i.e. Booster dose or Primary course (Dose 1, 2 or additional immunocompromised dose).
- Check the patient has completed their Primary course (including additional immunocompromised dose where applicable) before selecting to administer a Booster dose.
- Check the recommended interval has elapsed since last vaccination or COVID-19 infection.
 - For recommended intervals, please refer to Clinical guidance.
<https://www.rcpi.ie/Healthcare-Leadership/NIAC/Immunisation-Guidelines-for-Ireland>
 - For confirmation of the date of last vaccine dose, a 'Vaccination History Search' facility is available via the HSE's 'Health Provider Portal'. Further information is available in the Operational Guidance.
- Select the correct vaccine name e.g. Comirnaty XBB.1.5 is the recommended vaccine for booster dose and Comirnaty BA 4-5 must be used for primary course vaccination.
- Check the correct batch number and use-before date is entered.



Fees

The existing fee rates are being maintained for the administration of the COVID-19 and Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme for winter 2023/2024.

- The rate to be paid for COVID-19 vaccinations administered by pharmacists will remain at €25 per dose;
- The fee of €15 will be maintained for all QIV Influenza vaccinations administered to patients in the recommended HSE patient groups (GMS and non-GMS);
- In addition to this, each pharmacy will be eligible for a further payment of €100 for every 10 unique patients to whom he/she administers one of the QIV Influenza vaccines;
- A fee of €20 will apply for vaccinations administered using the (nasal) Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine (LAIV) for eligible children aged from 2 to 17 years inclusive;
- In addition, each pharmacy will be eligible for a further payment of €150 for every 10 unique patients aged from 2 to 17 years inclusive to whom he/she administers the LAIV.

Conclusion

I would like once again to express my sincere gratitude to Community Pharmacies and their teams for the efficient manner in which the COVID-19 and Influenza Vaccination Programmes have been delivered to date. I would also like to wish you and your team every success in delivering the vaccination programmes to your patients over the coming months.

Please be assured of the HSE's continued support at this time.

Yours sincerely,

Pat Healy
National Director
Clinical Programme Implementation
& Professional Development