



Oifig an Stiúirthóra Cúnta Náisiúnta
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Date: 24th August 2023

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

Dear Pharmacist,

The Autumn / Winter campaign 2023/2024 for COVID-19 boosters and Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme is due to commence at the beginning of October. It is aimed, where possible, to provide for co-administration of both vaccines at the same time for eligible individuals.

Influenza Vaccination Programme

The patient groups eligible for HSE free flu vaccine for the 2023/23 season are listed in Appendix 1.

Influenza Vaccines & Ordering

Flu vaccine deliveries will commence as per the National Cold Chain Service (NCCS) vaccine delivery calendar. The order quantity limits are based on the sites usage from previous years. The flu vaccines will be delivered to sites every two weeks.

When flu vaccine is available to order you will receive an email notification alerting you to place your order via the NCSS online ordering portal. Please check your online delivery calendar for cut-off times for ordering.

To enable flu vaccinations to commence in October:

- Influvac Tetra (QIV) vaccine deliveries will commence 18th September 2023 with all sites that have placed an order on time receiving a delivery by 29th September 2023
- Fluenz Tetra (LAIV) vaccine deliveries will commence 25th September 2023 with all sites that have placed an order on time receiving a delivery by 6th October 2023

Children's LAIV (Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine) Programme

A key Public Health priority is to improve the uptake of flu vaccine in children aged 2-12, and to achieve this a number of initiatives are planned for the upcoming season, including the delivery of LAIV in Primary School settings.

- HSE mobile Vaccination teams will provide the children's LAIV on-site in schools between October & December 2023 to:
 - Senior Infants in primary schools
 - Eligible children in primary age special schools
- The NIO will be facilitating Community Pharmacies and GP practices to link with local primary schools to provide on-site LAIV to children in other year groups where possible
- Parent / guardians of all eligible children will be encouraged to avail of the flu vaccine from participating GPs or Community Pharmacies



COVID-19 Booster Campaign

The patient groups recommended for a COVID-19 autumn booster are outlined in Appendix 2.

For full clinical guidance please see

<https://www.rcpi.ie/Portals/0/Document%20Repository/Healthcare%20Leadership/NIAC/CH5a%20COVID-19%2027.04.2023%20Final.pdf?ver=0um90z0gi3e6xSSGAM52Bg%3D%3D>

COVID-19 Vaccines and Ordering

The COVID-19 vaccine to be used for the autumn / winter campaign is yet to be confirmed.

Pharmacies should not commence ordering for the autumn / winter campaign until further information is available as to which vaccine will be used.

Vaccination Training and Education

Pharmacists who have completed the required training can supply and administer COVID-19 and Influenza vaccines.

- You can find out more information about training on the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland website www.thepsi.ie/gns/education/Training_for_Pharmacists_Vaccinations.aspx

Training is available for:

- COVID-19 Vaccine modules on www.hseland.ie. Vaccinators should complete the relevant modules on HSELand prior to the administration of COVID-19 vaccines. This training will be updated in due course to reflect any changes in vaccine type which may occur for the autumn / winter campaign.
- Influenza Vaccine modules on LAIV and QIV through the IIOP.
- NIAC Chapter 5a COVID-19
<https://www.rcpi.ie/Portals/0/Document%20Repository/Healthcare%20Leadership/NIAC/CH5a%20COVID-19%2027.04.2023%20Final.pdf?ver=0um90z0gi3e6xSSGAM52Bg%3D%3D>



HSE Vaccination Teams

COVID-19 Community Vaccination Centres (CVCs) have now closed. HSE Vaccination teams will be mobilised from operational bases (at least 2 per CHO).

For the autumn / winter campaign, HSE Vaccination teams will offer the following vaccination services:

- COVID-19 clinics for:
 - Children aged 6 months – 11 years
 - Prisons
- COVID-19 and Flu vaccines for those eligible who are:
 - Residents in Long Term Residential Care Facilities (LTRCFs) including Older Persons, Mental Health and Disability – in a key change from last season, HSE teams will offer both COVID-19 and Flu vaccines to eligible residents in all LTRCFs, and not just those which are HIQA registered
 - Health and Care Workers (HCW) - HSE teams will facilitate clinics in workplace settings for HCWs, with support from peer vaccinators. HCWs can also be vaccinated through Community Pharmacies.
 - Hard to reach groups
 - Housebound – for housebound referral pathway see: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/gmscontracts/2019agreement/>
 - In-patients in acute hospitals

In addition, HSE mobile teams may set up temporary and pop-up clinics as required during the campaign, to provide COVID-19 and/or Influenza vaccines in local areas to target uptake in particular locations or cohorts. Some operational bases can provide temporary clinics on-site if required.

Aside from the pathways listed above, the majority of COVID-19 boosters and Flu vaccinations will be provided in the community, through Community Pharmacies and GPs.

Eligible individuals who previously attended CVCs for their COVID-19 boosters will now be coming forward to their local Pharmacy or GP; based on trends in uptake rates to date, it is estimated that Community Pharmacies should plan for **an increase in demand of approximately 10%** compared to last winter for COVID-19 boosters.

Pharmacy Finder

Community Pharmacies are key in providing easy access and choice to those who require vaccinations. As we are now focused on co-administration for those who are eligible for both vaccines, the Flu and COVID-19 Pharmacy Finder is in the process of being merged see <https://www2.hse.ie/services/pharmacies-flu-and-covid-vaccines/>. A number of Pharmacies offering vaccination are not currently displayed in the public access HSE Pharmacy Finder. It is important that pharmacies providing vaccination services are listed on the Pharmacy Finder, and that this is kept up to date and accurate for each vaccination campaign. The Pharmacy Service Listing form to add/update the pharmacy details is available at <https://www.hse.ie/eng/pharmacy-service-request/>. We ask Pharmacists to review and update their details on the new amalgamated Flu/COVID-19 Finder.



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 these vaccination programmes to your patients over the coming months.

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

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. Crowley', written over a horizontal line.

Geraldine Crowley
Assistant National Director
Enhanced Community Care Programme &
Primary Care Contract



Appendix 1:

Influenza Vaccination Programme - Eligible Cohorts

The following groups are eligible for the HSE free flu vaccine in 2023/24:

- All children aged 2-12 years at the time of vaccination
- Persons aged 65 and older
- Pregnant women (at any stage of pregnancy)
- Those aged 6 to 23 months and aged 13-64 years with:
 - Chronic heart disease including acute coronary syndrome
 - Chronic liver disease
 - Chronic neurological disease including multiple sclerosis, hereditary and degenerative disorders of the central nervous system
 - Chronic renal failure
 - Cancer patients
 - Chronic respiratory disease, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cystic fibrosis, moderate or severe asthma or bronchopulmonary dysplasia
 - Diabetes mellitus
 - Down syndrome
 - Haemoglobinopathies
 - Immunosuppression due to disease or treatment, including asplenia or splenic dysfunction and cancer patients
 - Morbid obesity, i.e. body mass index of 40 or over
 - On long-term aspirin therapy (because of the risk of Reyes syndrome)
 - With any condition (e.g. cognitive dysfunction, spinal cord injury, seizure disorder, or other neuromuscular disorder) that can compromise respiratory function especially those attending special schools/day centres
 - With moderate to severe neurodevelopmental disorders such as cerebral palsy and intellectual disability
- Healthcare workers including all General Practice and pharmacy staff
- Residents of nursing homes and other long stay institutions
- Carers and household contacts of people with increased medical risk**
- People with regular contact with pigs, poultry or water fowl

** Only household contacts or carers of people who have an underlying chronic health condition or have Down syndrome are eligible to receive an influenza vaccine. A carer is described as someone who is providing an ongoing significant level of care to a person who is in need of care in the home due to illness or disability or frailty e.g. those in receipt of a carer's allowance. Household contacts of people aged 65 years and older (who do not also have a chronic health condition), of pregnant women, of children aged 2-12 years or of healthcare workers or carers are not recommended the influenza vaccine unless they are in an at-risk group themselves.

Please note that for children aged 13 to 17 years, only those who are in an at-risk group are eligible in the 2023/24 season cohort.



Appendix 2:

Further clinical guidance will be published by the National Immunisation Office prior to campaign commencement.

COVID-19 Booster Campaign

The following groups are recommended by NIAC for an autumn COVID-19 booster:

- those aged 50 years and older
- those aged 5-49 with immunocompromise associated with a suboptimal response to vaccination
- those aged 5-49 with medical conditions associated with a higher risk of COVID-19 hospitalisation, severe disease or death
- those aged 18-49 who, following discussion of their reasons with a health care provider (e.g., GP, pharmacist or vaccination centre), request vaccination
- health and care workers

In addition, the following groups remain eligible for COVID-19 vaccination throughout the year:

- Primary Courses for those aged 6 months and older
- First booster dose for people aged 18 years and over, or 12 years and over if immunocompromised
- Pregnant women in the appropriate stage of pregnancy and where the appropriate time since last dose of vaccine has elapsed



Appendix 3: Table of contact details

Query	Telephone	Email	Commentary
Vaccine ordering & deliveries issues – NCCS	(01) 463 7770	vaccines@udd.ie	Any queries relating to quantity/allocation should be raised through the email address.
Vaccine consumables	081 800 88 11	pharmacyvaccines@vision.com	Queries relating to order or delivery of vaccine consumables.
Clinical queries – National Immunisation Office		immunisation@hse.ie	For clinical queries and queries relating to cold chain maintenance or breakdown, please e-mail.
Data Quality Errors	(01) 240 8786		For Data quality support, please contact the support team.
Payment Queries/Claims	(01) 864 7100	PCRS.PPUQueries@hse.ie	For any payment queries regarding any vaccines. Please do not contact PCRS for registration issues, data quality errors, clinical queries, or queries outside of reimbursement of vaccinations.
General queries & relationship management	081 800 8811	pharmacyvaccines@vision.com	Other general queries/information, please contact the relationship management team.
PharmaVax technical queries	(01) 7784998	a2ihids.support@healthmail.ie Alternative: a2ihids.support@hse.ie	Any technical queries, usability or system issues. Monday to Saturday 9am to 5pm.
Healthmail Issues	(061) 203779	ictsupport@three.ie	Any queries relating to your Healthmail account including the secondary email address attached to your account.