



Oifig an Stiúirthóra Cúnta Náisiúnta
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Conarthaí Príomhchúraim
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
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Date: 19th August 2024

Reference: NCO-32-2024 **Autumn / Winter Vaccination Programme 2024/2025**

Dear Doctor,

The autumn / winter vaccination programme 2024/2025 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

Please find communication from the National Immunisation Office in relation to the Influenza Vaccination Programme appended to this letter.

Children's LAIV (Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine) Primary Schools Programme

GPs are reminded to provide the HSE with details of the primary schools where they have agreed to offer LAIV onsite during the 2024/25 season, using the forms provided at [LAIV Schools Programme Planning 2024/2025](#). Details of the primary school Roll Number and Eircode for each participating school will be required. Where forms have already been returned, any changes or amendments may still be submitted in September.

Stock allocation of Fluenz nasal spray suspension (LAIV) to GPs for school-based vaccination will be based on the information provided on the planning forms as outlined above.

COVID-19 Booster Campaign

NIAC have recommended the following patient groups for a COVID-19 autumn booster:

- Those aged 60 years and older
- Those aged 6 months – 59 years with immunocompromise associated with a suboptimal response to vaccination
- Those aged 6 months – 59 years with medical conditions associated with a higher risk of COVID-19 hospitalisation, severe disease or death
- Those aged 18-59 years living in long term care facilities for older adults
- Health and care workers

For pregnant adolescents and adults, a COVID-19 vaccine once in pregnancy is recommended if it is more than six months since their previous COVID-19 vaccine or infection. COVID-19 vaccine can be given at any stage in pregnancy, ideally given between 20-34 weeks' gestation.

Further, NIAC has advised that for those aged 18-59 years who are healthy a COVID-19 vaccine is not routinely recommended this autumn, however access to a COVID-19 vaccine should be available for those who, following discussion of their reasons with a health care provider (e.g., GP, pharmacist or vaccination centre), request vaccination.

COVID-19 Vaccines and Ordering

The COVID-19 vaccine to be used and vaccine allocations for the autumn booster programme will shortly be confirmed, and a communication will issue via the HSE National Cold Chain Service (NCCS) when orders are open.

Removal of COVID-19 vaccine types:

I refer to communication [NCO-28-24](#) on removal of vaccine types. Comirnaty Original/Omicron BA.4-5 (COVID-19 Vaccine) will be removed from GP IT Systems effective from 2nd September 2024. Any outstanding vaccine records and claims relating to the above product must be entered by 5pm on 2nd September 2024 as it will not be possible to submit after this date.



Vaccination Training and Education

Key resources will be available for vaccinators ahead of the autumn / winter campaign, please see:

- Accredited COVID-19 Vaccination Training modules are available 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 the new vaccine type for the autumn / winter campaign.
- The updated [NIAC chapters](#) for COVID-19 and Influenza are expected to be published shortly.
- Information for healthcare professionals is available on www.immunisation.ie

Pneumococcal vaccine (PPV23)

The Pneumovax 23 vaccine, which prevents severe disease caused by the pneumococcal bacteria, is available to order from the NCCS and recommended for all those aged 65 years and over, and those ≥ 2 years of age to 64 years in risk groups. It can be co-administered with flu and COVID-19 vaccines. The pneumococcal vaccine (PPV23) is free if your patients are 65 years or older, or if they are in an at-risk group. Please remind all patients aged 65 and over and patients aged 2 to 64 years in an at risk group about the vaccine. Further information is available at <https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/hcpinfo/othervaccines/pneumo/pneumovacc.html>

Updates and Resources

The **Operational Guidance** for Vaccination in General Practice is currently being updated and will be available to view or download on the GP section of our webpage.

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

Updates and information resources are available at [Vaccination Primary Care Contractors Programme](#).

There is a suite of [Guidance Notes](#) to assist you in the management of queries including:

- Guidance Note 1 on COVID-19 Vaccine Consumables
- Guidance Note 3 on Management of Repeat Primary Course COVID-19 Vaccination for Clinical Reasons
- Guidance Note 10 on Immunocompromised Assessment Pathway for COVID-19

Conclusion

I would like once again to express my sincere gratitude to General Practitioners 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,

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



NIO.02.09.24.01

August 2024

Influenza Vaccination Programme 2024/25

Dear Doctor

Annual influenza (flu) vaccination is strongly recommended for those aged 60 and older, those at risk and children aged 2-17 years and for it to be administered early in the season.

Vaccines available

Two types of flu vaccines will be available for 2024/25 HSE seasonal flu vaccination programme.

1. LAIV: live attenuated influenza vaccine Fluenz nasal spray suspension manufactured by AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals (Ireland) DAC is packed in boxes of 10 applicators. Available for use in for all children aged 2—17 years.
2. QIV: Injectable inactivated egg-based quadrivalent influenza vaccine. Two brands of this will be supplied - Influvac Tetra (manufactured by Mylan) and Quadrivalent Influenza Vaccine (manufactured by Sanofi Pasteur) both are packed in boxes of 10 prefilled syringes. Available for all other eligible populations including those eligible children (aged 2-17 years) with contraindications to LAIV. QIV is licensed for those 6 months of age and older.

Eligible groups for 2024/25 HSE influenza vaccination programme

The following groups are eligible to receive the flu vaccine for free through the HSE programme.

People who:

- Are 60 years of age and over
- Are a child aged 2 to 17 years
- Are pregnant
- All those aged 6-23 months and 18-59 years at increased risk of influenza-related complications such as:
 - Those with chronic illness, e.g. chronic heart disease (including acute coronary syndrome), chronic liver disease, chronic neurological disease (where the neurological condition compromises clearance of respiratory secretions), chronic renal failure, chronic respiratory disease (including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cystic fibrosis, moderate or severe asthma, and bronchopulmonary dysplasia), diabetes mellitus, or haemoglobinopathies
 - Those with immunosuppression due to disease or treatment, including asplenia or hyposplenism, and all cancer patients
 - Those with any condition that can compromise respiratory function (e.g. spinal cord injury, seizure disorder, or other neuromuscular disorder especially those attending special schools/day centres)
 - Children and adults with Down syndrome
 - Children with moderate to severe neurodevelopmental disorders such as cerebral palsy and intellectual disability
 - Those with morbid obesity (Body mass index >40)
 - Children on long term aspirin therapy
- Residents of nursing homes, old people's homes, and other long stay facilities where rapid spread is likely to follow introduction of infection
- Healthcare workers
- Household contacts of people with underlying chronic health conditions or Down syndrome
- Out-of-home care givers for people who have an underlying chronic health condition or have Down syndrome
- People in regular contact with pigs, poultry or waterfowl

Vaccine ordering

Order vaccines online ordervaccines.ie from the HSE National Cold Chain Service (NCCS) as per order dates before cut-off time.

Once NCCS communicates that orders are open, you can order:

- Up to 100% of your **Influvac Tetra (QIV)** allocation, based on previous Flu seasons, with fortnightly deliveries commencing in mid-September as per your delivery calendar
- Up to 50% of your **Fluenz nasal spray suspension (LAIV)** allocation based on previous Flu seasons, **is available to order in the first cycle with the remainder available in the next cycle.** Fortnightly deliveries commence in late September as per your delivery calendar. Due to the short shelf life of this vaccine it should be ordered on a fortnightly basis, with quantities based on planned appointments.
- If you do not have an account with the NCCS and wish to participate in this year's flu vaccination programme, please contact vaccines@udd.ie by the week of August 19th at the latest.

Patient held vaccination record cards for QIV and post vaccination (tear-pad) leaflets for LAIV will be delivered with the vaccine, which should be completed and given to your patients after vaccination. Please only order the amount of vaccine that you will require before your next delivery. Please plan your clinics accordingly as deliveries will be fortnightly.



The HSE COVID-19 vaccination teams will order flu vaccine required for Long-Term Residential Care Facilities (including nursing homes) therefore these sites have been advised not to order flu vaccines for residents.

A communication will issue shortly regarding the Autumn COVID-19 booster vaccine campaign. Please do not place orders for COVID-19 vaccines for use in the autumn booster programme until this communication is received and orders are open. Any current COVID-19 vaccines can only be used for those receiving primary courses, pregnant women and others eligible during the summer period.

Operational pathways for eligible cohorts

From **1st October** HSE COVID-19 mobile vaccination teams will offer flu vaccine and COVID -19 booster, if needed, to the following cohorts:

- Long-Term Residential Care Facilities
 - to all residents (regardless of age)
 - Health and Care Workers (H&CWs).H&CWs can also access the free flu vaccine at participating GPs and pharmacies or via the local flu peer vaccination service.
- Housebound Patients
 - Who are eligible for free HSE flu vaccine and where they are receiving their COVID-19 vaccination.
 - Where housebound are not scheduled for COVID-19 boosters they won't be offered flu vaccinations by the HSE COVID-19 mobile vaccination teams, unless referred through the appropriate pathway for a flu vaccination.

It is expected that all other eligible cohorts will be vaccinated in primary care.

Immunisation system for flu vaccinations

GP patient management systems have been reconfigured and the HSE GPVax system updated to enable:

- COVID-19, Flu and PPV23 vaccination records from GPs to transmit electronically from their software to COVAX.
- COVID-19, Flu and PPV23 payment claims from GPs to be sent to PCRS team

As there are many providers of flu vaccinations, it is essential that all vaccines given are recorded promptly, so that clinical records are kept up to date and two doses are not administered in error.

Data Quality (DQ) is very important to all of us. Sometimes the data messages coming from the source systems may not communicate correctly or the data entered may not be fully complete. In order to clarify and address the data issue, the National Immunisation Office, (NIO) will work with HSELive to seek clarification. This will mean that vaccinators may receive a phone call from HSELive to clarify data items. HSELive is part of the HSE and the team work closely with the NIO and contracting office to seek clarification to resolve DQ issues. There is dedicated line for GP's and Pharmacies to ring HSELive, in relation to DQ issues which is: 01 2408786.

Actions required by you

- ✓ Please remove all expired vaccines including 2023/2024 flu season vaccines and place them in a box with completed returns form, store securely until returned to the HSE National Cold Chain Service van driver.
- ✓ Vaccine deliveries will be fortnightly from mid-September once the order has been placed in time as per your calendar. Ensure you have adequate pharmaceutical fridge space for arriving vaccines.
- ✓ Do not order COVID 19 booster vaccine for the 2024 Autumn Booster Programme until a communication on the programme is issued.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr Lucy Jessop
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