



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Copy for Information

September 2011

To: Each General Practitioner

IMPORTANT NEWS

Re: Influenza Vaccination Campaign 2011/2012

Dear Doctor,

This letter contains important information about the 2011/2012 influenza vaccination campaign

The World Health Organization has recommended that the seasonal influenza vaccines for the 2011/2012 season (Northern Hemisphere winter) contain:

- an A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)-like virus (**the pandemic H1N1 2009 virus**)
- an A/Perth/16/2009 (H3N2)-like virus;
- a B/Brisbane/60/2008-like virus

The immunity gained from seasonal influenza vaccine only lasts for up to 12 months and wanes over time. Annual vaccination is required to provide the best protection even though the vaccine strains for the 2011/2012 season are the same as those for 2011/2012.

For the 2011/2012 campaign the National Immunisation Advisory Committee has made the following new recommendations

- All pregnant women receive seasonal influenza vaccine .The vaccine can be given at any stage of pregnancy. This year influenza vaccine is not recommended for those women up to six weeks post partum
- Women who were pregnant at the end of the last influenza season, who were given seasonal influenza vaccine then and who have not yet delivered their baby should receive a further dose of 2011/2012 seasonal influenza vaccine.
- People with a known anaphylactic hypersensitivity reaction to eggs can be given an influenza vaccine with a low ovalbumin content (details below).
- All children over 6 months of age in the at risk groups should receive a full dose of seasonal influenza vaccine (0.5mls).

This year only one seasonal influenza vaccine will be in use - Inactivated Influenza Vaccine (Split Virion) BP manufactured by Sanofi Pasteur MSD which comes in packs of 10 pre filled syringes. This influenza vaccine has a low ovalbumin content (containing no more than 0.024 µg ovalbumin per dose).

This year patient held vaccination record cards will be sent with your vaccine delivery. These should be completed and given to the patient after vaccination. New posters for display and a supply of leaflets for your patients will be sent to you shortly. As in previous years there will be an additional delivery to all General Practitioners to facilitate supply of influenza vaccine.

Seasonal influenza vaccine is provided free for all those aged 65 years and over, those in at-risk groups and healthcare staff (as outlined in the attachment). Those that do not have a medical card or GP visit

card will be liable for a fee set by you. Claims for the vaccination of medical card or GP visit card holders in the groups as per the attachment can be made through the PCRS.

The seasonal influenza vaccine supplied by the HSE National Cold Chain Service is specifically for those in the at risk groups. Vaccine for individuals outside of these groups can be obtained through the private market.

There is no change in the recommendations for pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine, PPV23 (Pneumovax) i.e. for those aged 65 years and over and those in specific at risk groups.

A **once only** PPV23 booster vaccination is recommended 5 years after the first vaccination for those

- aged 65 years and older if they received vaccine more than 5 years before and were less than 65 years of age at the time of the first dose.
- whose antibody levels are likely to decline rapidly e.g. asplenia, splenic dysfunction, immunosuppression, renal transplant or chronic renal disease

Further PPV 23 booster vaccinations are not routinely recommended

Further information about the influenza and pneumococcal vaccination campaign including a frequently asked questions section about the enclosed recommendations is available on the National Immunisation website www.immunisation.ie and will be sent to you with the information materials

Actions required by you:

1. place your order for Seasonal Influenza and Pneumococcal Polysaccharide vaccines PPV 23 (Pneumovax) for this year's campaign with the HSE National Cold Chain Service.
2. use the returns service provided by the HSE National Cold Chain Service for
 - o any remaining seasonal influenza vaccine 2010/2011
 - o any remaining pandemic vaccine

Maximising uptake among at-risk groups and front-line health care workers is critical in the prevention of morbidity and mortality and your support in this regard is highly appreciated.

If you require any further information or have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Director of Public Health

Department of Public Health

Recommendations for seasonal influenza vaccine 2011/2012

The 2011/2012 seasonal influenza vaccine is strongly recommended for

- all those aged 65 years and older
- adults and children over 6 months of age with any of the following
 - chronic illness requiring regular follow up (e.g. chronic respiratory disease including cystic fibrosis, moderate or severe asthma, chronic heart disease, chronic neurological disease, diabetes mellitus, chronic liver disease, chronic neurological disease including multiple sclerosis, hereditary and degenerative disorders of the central nervous system etc)
 - those who are immunosuppressed due to disease or treatment including those with missing or non functioning spleens
- children 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
- children and teenagers on long-term aspirin therapy (because of the risk of Reyes syndrome)
- those with morbid obesity i.e. Body Mass Index over 40
- **pregnant women (vaccine can be given at any stage of pregnancy)**
- healthcare workers
- residents of nursing homes, and other long stay institutions
- carers
- people who have close, regular contact with pigs, poultry or water fowl

BOLD indicates new group for 2011/2012