



Oifig an Stiúrthóra Náisiúnta Straiteis Pobail agus Pleanála
Ospidéal Dr. Steevens, BAC 8, D08 W2A8

Office of National Director Community Strategy and Planning
HSE, Dr Steevens Hospital, Dublin 8. D08 W2A8

Date: 1st September, 2020

Circular Number: NCO-12-2020

Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme –Winter 2020/2021

Dear Community Pharmacy Contractor,

The seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme for winter 2020/21 will be launched at the beginning of October 2020.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic a number of changes are being made to the groups who will be able to access the seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme for winter 2020/21 as follows;

- (i) All those aged 6-23 months and 13-64 years in a risk group can receive the vaccine and have it administered by their GP or Community Pharmacy Contractor (CPC) of choice free of charge.
- (ii) All those aged 65 years and over regardless of (i) whether they are in a risk group and (ii) their eligibility status can receive the vaccine and have it administered by their GP or CPC of choice free of charge.
- (iii) All healthy children aged 2-12 years regardless of (i) whether they are in a risk group and (ii) their eligibility status can receive the vaccine and have it administered by their GP or CPC of choice free of charge.

Children aged from 2-12 years should receive the vaccine intra-nasally (LAIV) unless they are contraindicated, while all others will receive it via the usual intra- muscular route (QIV).

Annually, Ireland starts delivering flu vaccine earlier than other EU jurisdictions and it is expected that this will also happen this year as Ireland will receive doses from the first released batches. There has been a short delay in the delivery of the QIV flu vaccine from the manufacturer. This delay is likely to be about two weeks, and it affects all customers, not only Ireland. It is caused by an administrative delay, and not by any issues in the manufacture or quality of the vaccine. In this context, deliveries of the QIV vaccine will be at a similar time as last season commencing in mid-September (provided that no further unforeseen delays occur). As normal it will be a two weekly delivery schedule to CPCs. Individual delivery calendars have been updated and will be emailed to all CPCs. They will also be available on the National Cold Chain

Service website. Notification of LAIV vaccine availability will be communicated by the National Cold Chain Service (NCSS) and it is anticipated that distribution of vaccine will commence early-mid October.

The cohort of people to be vaccinated in the Programme is the same as last year for QIV (new cohort 2-12 year old children will get LAIV- nasal vaccine). Influenza vaccines supplied to your pharmacy through the NCSS are only to be administered to the patient groups described above.

Sufficient vaccines have been ordered for the “at risk” groups (including over 65’s, pregnant women etc.). We know that circa 40% of vaccines distributed in previous years have been used for non-GMS patients. These non-GMS “at risk” patients will now have the vaccine administered free of charge and the CPC will be reimbursed through PCERS for same. In previous years vaccinations administered to this non-GMS “at risk” group was not captured on the uptake reports. This season the uptake report will be comprehensive given the increase in the number of adults and children who are eligible to have the vaccine administered to them free of charge. Future season’s vaccine requirements will use information from PCERS based on this season’s reports as this will reflect requirements for each CPC.

Following consultation with the IPU, the Minister for Health, with the approval of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, has determined, pursuant to Section 42 of the Public Service (Pay and Pensions) Act, 2017, that the following fee rates should apply for the administration of the seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme for winter 2020/21.

- The existing fee of €15 will be maintained for all QIV Influenza vaccinations, GMS and non-GMS;
- In addition to this, each CPC will be eligible for a further payment of €100 for every 10 unique patients to whom the QIV Influenza vaccination is administered by the CPC;
- A fee of €20 will be made available for vaccinations using the (nasal) Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine (LAIV) for children aged from 2 to 12 years inclusive;
- In addition, each CPC will be eligible for a further payment of €150 for every 10 unique patients aged from 2 to 12 years inclusive to whom the LAIV is administered by the CPC;

In determining the fee rates for the seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme for winter 2020/21 the Minister had regard to the expansion of the Vaccination Programme for winter 2020/21, the need to achieve uptake levels, the logistical challenges in delivering the Programme during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the special arrangements that CPCs may decide to put in place to deliver the vaccination programme, such as dedicated vaccination clinics etc.

All Community Pharmacy Contractors with full GMS contracts can provide both the LAIV and QIV Influenza vaccinations when they have completed the requisite training. Training costs can be claimed back at the end of October 2020.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Community Pharmacy Contractors and their staff for their efforts to- date in continuing to deliver services in very challenging circumstances during this public health emergency. I would also like to wish you and your team every success in delivering the seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme over the coming months.

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

Yours sincerely,



Pat Healy,
National Director,
Community Strategy and Planning

