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28th October 2025

Influenza and COVID-19 Vaccination Programme 2025/2026: Update

Dear Doctor/Pharmacist,

The seasonal influenza and COVID-19 vaccination programmes are well underway, and we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support of these programmes.

We know this is a busy time of year, so please see below for some important reminders about the influenza and COVID-19 programmes that we would like to bring to your attention:

COVID-19 vaccine available

The National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC) recommend antigenically updated COVID-19 mRNA vaccines for the autumn/winter programme in 2025/2026. The antigenically updated COVID-19 vaccine **Comirnaty LP.8.1** manufactured by Pfizer is available for all age groups. For those aged 12 years and older the vaccine is **Comirnaty LP.8.1 30 micrograms**. This is multidose vial with a grey cap containing **6 doses**. Please follow tips to avoid vaccine wastage that were circulated recently from the National Cold Chain Service (NCCS).

Stock management

Please ensure that you have removed all expired vaccines including all old influenza and COVID-19 vaccine stock from your fridge. In particular, **please ensure that all older variant COVID-19 vaccines used for previous campaigns are removed**. All vaccines can be returned to NCCS in the normal way. Please also ensure that you have the fridge capacity to safely store all vaccines that are ordered.

Vaccine ordering

Vaccines should be ordered online (www.ordervaccines.ie) from the HSE National Cold Chain Service (NCCS) as per delivery calendar and before cut-off time. Emergency deliveries cannot be facilitated. All vaccine deliveries are fortnightly. Please plan your clinics accordingly.

Please check vaccine expiry dates before administering vaccines

It is absolutely **essential that expiry dates are checked before vaccines are administered**. Please be aware that for COVID-19 vaccines, you should refer to the USE BEFORE date on the box and not the manufacturer's expiry date on the vial. A vaccine given after this USE BEFORE date and time is an expired vaccine. Please see the COVID-19 clinical guidance for further information

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/hcpinfo/covid19vaccineinfo4hps/covid19-clinical-guidance-v57.pdf>

Please also be aware that the Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine (LAIV) has a short shelf life.

The first deliveries of LAIV have an expiry date of 9th December 2025. Please ensure that vaccines are used before the expiry date and put the above measures in place to ensure that no expired vaccines are administered. When you get a new delivery, please ensure good stock rotation so that shortest-dated vaccines are used first.

Vaccine administration and recording

As there are many providers of influenza and COVID-19 vaccines, it is essential that all vaccines given are recorded accurately. **Records of vaccine administration should be entered at the time of vaccination so that clinical records are kept up to date**. This will avoid the potential for two doses of the same vaccine to be administered in error. This includes when children are vaccinated with LAIV in school or in primary care settings. **Vaccination status must be checked before administering vaccines** to ensure that a dose of the vaccine has not been administered previously during the season.

**Informed consent**

Prior to vaccination, **informed consent must be obtained** by the individual or the team who is administering the vaccine. In school settings it is **essential that the correct children are identified in advance of vaccination**. Please follow all of the steps in the toolkit to support LAIV administration to ensure the delivery of a safe, high quality programme.

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/hcpinfo/fluinfo/toolkit-laiv-primarycare-2025-26.pdf>

Clinical queries

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

Conclusion

I would like once again to express my sincere gratitude to General Practitioners, General Practice Nurses and Pharmacists 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 remainder of the seasonal vaccination programme.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lucy Jessop', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Dr. Lucy Jessop
Consultant in Public Health Medicine
National Immunisation Office MRCN
424447