



Oifig Náisiúnta Imdhíonta
Aonaid 8/9 Páirc Gnó Shráid an Mhainéir
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Dear Doctor,

04th Sept 2023

Influenza Vaccination Programme 2023/24

Annual influenza (flu) vaccination is strongly recommended for those aged 65 and older, those at risk and children aged 2-12 years and for it to be administered in early in the season.

Vaccines available

Two types of flu vaccines will be available for 2023/2024 HSE seasonal flu vaccination programme.

1. LAIV: live attenuated, nasal spray suspension vaccine - Fluenz Tetra packed in boxes of 10 applicators. Available for use in the HSE programme for all children aged 2-12 years and at-risk children aged 13-17 years (eligible cohorts as listed below).
2. QIV: Injectable inactivated egg-based quadrivalent influenza vaccine- Influvac Tetra, (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 2023/24 HSE influenza vaccination programme

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

- are 65 years of age and over
- are a child aged 2 to 12 years
- are pregnant
- all those aged 6-23 months and 13-64 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)
- 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 condition 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.

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

- Up to 100% of your **Influvac Tetra (QIV)** allocation, with fortnightly deliveries commencing on 18th September 2023 as per your delivery calendar
- **Fluenz Tetra (LAIV)** as required based on vaccination clinics planned with fortnightly deliveries commencing on 25th September 2023 as per your delivery calendar. This vaccine will expire **29th December 2023**.

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.



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Operational pathways for eligible cohorts

From **2nd 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.
- Children in Senior Infants (mainstream schools) and all children in primary-age special schools across Ireland, will be offered nasal flu vaccine (LAIV) between October and December 2023.

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

Key resources

The following key resources are available:

- Visit www.hse.ie/flu for patient information material and to download HSE flu campaign resources (including leaflets and posters)
- Information for healthcare professionals is available on www.immunisation.ie
- E-learning modules on LAIV and QIV are available on www.hseland.ie

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.

Actions required by you

- ✓ Please remove all expired vaccines including 2022/2023 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 18th 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 2023 Autumn Booster Programme until a communication on the programme is issued.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr Lucy Jessop
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