



To: Each General Practitioner

August 2019

IMPORTANT NEWS
Re: Influenza Vaccination Campaign 2019/2020

Dear Doctor,

This letter contains important information about the **2019/2020 influenza vaccination campaign**.

The World Health Organization has recommended that the seasonal influenza vaccines for the 2019/2020 season (Northern Hemisphere winter) contain:

- an A/Brisbane/02/2018 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus;
- an A/Kansas/14/2017 (H3N2)-like virus;
- a B/Colorado/06/2017-like virus (B/Victoria/2/87 lineage); and
- a B/Phuket/3073/2013-like virus (B/Yamagata/16/88 lineage).

2019/2020 Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Campaign

This season, an inactivated quadrivalent vaccine will be used for the influenza vaccination campaign. The vaccine which will be distributed by the HSE National Cold Chain Service, is the **Quadrivalent Influenza Vaccine (split virion, inactivated)** manufactured by Sanofi Pasteur. It comes as pre-filled syringes in boxes of 10.

Please note the following recommendations from the National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC) which have been included in revised chapters of the Immunisation Guidelines:

Until further evidence emerges, patients on combination checkpoint inhibitors (e.g. ipilimumab plus nivolumab) should not receive any influenza vaccines, because of a potential association with immune-related adverse reactions.

Seasonal influenza vaccine is provided free for all those aged 65 years and over, pregnant women, adults and children 6 months and older with chronic medical conditions and healthcare workers (including general practice staff) as outlined in the attachment with this letter.

Those that do not have a medical card or GP visit card will be liable for a fee for administration of the vaccine (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 people in the at-risk groups specified in the attachment with this letter. Vaccine for individuals outside of these groups must be purchased privately.

Please note that for the 2019/2020 influenza season, pharmacists may administer the flu vaccine to children from the age of 10 years and upwards.

Pneumococcal Polysaccharide Vaccine (PPV23)

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.

Patients aged 65 and over who have never previously received PPV23 require a once only dose of PPV23.

A once only PPV23 booster vaccination is recommended 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.

Otherwise, additional PPV23 booster vaccinations are not routinely recommended, so it is important to check if patients have received PPV23 vaccine in the past, prior to administration. This is outlined in the algorithm in the 2019/2020 Frequently Asked Questions booklet enclosed.

Vaccine ordering and deliveries

Please order Influenza and Pneumococcal Polysaccharide Vaccine PPV23 from the National Cold Chain Service (NCCS). Further information of the dates when orders can commence for Influenza Vaccine will be sent to you via the NCCS.

Patient held vaccination record cards will be sent with your vaccine delivery which should be completed and given to your patients after vaccination.

New posters for display and a supply of leaflets for your patients are enclosed.

Actions required by you

- Please remove from the fridge all influenza vaccines from the 2018/2019 flu season and any other expired vaccines today or as soon as possible. Please place them in a box and return them to the HSE National Cold Chain Service by giving them to the NCCS van driver when he/she next delivers.
- If you wish to order more information materials please visit www.healthpromotion.ie and order materials from there.

Further information about the influenza and pneumococcal vaccination campaign including a frequently asked questions section is available on the National Immunisation website. www.immunisation.ie

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. In particular, please encourage your pregnant patients and those in high-risk groups to be vaccinated.

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

Yours sincerely,



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Influenza vaccination is strongly recommended for:

- **Persons aged 65 and older**
- **Pregnant women (vaccine can be given at any stage of pregnancy)**
- **Those aged 6 months and older with a long-term health condition such as:**
 - Chronic heart disease including acute coronary syndrome
 - Chronic liver disease
 - Chronic neurological disease including multiple sclerosis, hereditary and degenerative disorders of the central nervous system
 - Chronic renal failure
 - Cancer patients
 - Chronic respiratory disease, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cystic fibrosis, moderate or severe asthma or bronchopulmonary dysplasia
 - Diabetes mellitus
 - Down syndrome
 - Haemoglobinopathies
 - Immunosuppression due to disease or treatment, including asplenia or splenic dysfunction and cancer patients
 - Morbid obesity, i.e. body mass index of 40 or over
- **Children aged 6 months and older**
 - 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
 - with moderate to severe neurodevelopmental disorders such as cerebral palsy and intellectual disability
 - on long-term aspirin therapy (because of the risk of Reyes syndrome)
- **Healthcare workers including all General Practice staff**
- **Residents of nursing homes and other long stay institutions**
- **Carers and household contacts of people with increased medical risk**
- **People with regular contact with pigs, poultry or water fowl**