



Oifig Náisiúnta Imdhíonta
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To: **General Practitioner**

22 September 2021

IMPORTANT NEWS
Re: Influenza Vaccination Campaign 2021/2022

Dear Doctor,

This letter contains important information about the **2021/2022 influenza vaccination campaign**.

The World Health Organization has recommended that the seasonal influenza vaccines for the 2021/2022 season (Northern Hemisphere winter) contain:

- an A/Victoria/2570/2019 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus
- an A/Cambodia/e0826360/2020 (H3N2)-like virus
- a B/Washington/02/2019 (B/Victoria lineage)-like virus
- a B/Phuket/3073/2013 (B/Yamagata lineage)-like virus

This season, three influenza vaccines will be distributed by the HSE National Cold Chain Service:

- **Fluad Tetra** manufactured by Seqirus. This adjuvanted quadrivalent Influenza vaccine (aQIV) is a non-live influenza vaccine. It is licensed for use in people aged 65 years and over only and is the recommended vaccine for this age group. This is given **intramuscularly** and comes in pre-filled syringes in boxes of 10. Only **one dose** is required each season (regardless of medical condition). Gently shake before use. After shaking the normal appearance of the vaccine is milky white suspension.
- **Quadrivalent Influenza Vaccine (QIV) (split virion, inactivated)** manufactured by Sanofi Pasteur. This is given **intramuscularly** and comes in pre-filled syringes in boxes of 10. QIV is recommended for children aged 6 to 23 months and adults aged 18 to 64 years with chronic medical conditions, pregnant women, healthcare workers (including general practice staff and students) and carers.
- **Fluenz Tetra, a live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV)** manufactured by AstraZeneca. This is given **intranasally** and comes in prefilled nasal applicators in boxes of 10. LAIV is recommended for all children aged 2 to 17 years at the time of vaccination. Vaccination of children aged 2-17 years will reduce their rates of infection and also lower transmission to others and so reduce morbidity and mortality in those in the clinical risk groups and older adults.

Fluad Tetra – a new adjuvanted flu vaccine for those aged 65 and over

As we get older our immune system may not respond to vaccines to the same extent. Therefore, the adjuvanted flu vaccine is being offered to adults aged 65 years and over for the first time in Ireland this year.

An adjuvant (MF59C.1) derived from squalene oil which occurs naturally in humans, animals and nature is used in this vaccine. The adjuvant (MF59C.1) is designed to trigger a greater, broader and longer immune response to the vaccine. The adjuvant also contains polysorbate-80, a high molecular weight polysaccharide also reported to cause allergic reactions including, rarely, anaphylaxis.

If Fluad Tetra is not available in adults aged 65 and over the Quadrivalent Influenza Vaccine (QIV) (split virion, inactivated) could be considered if it is not contraindicated.



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Egg Allergy

The National Immunisation Advisory Committee recommends that those with confirmed egg anaphylaxis or egg allergy can be given influenza vaccine in a primary care or school setting with the exception of those who have required admission to ICU for a previous severe anaphylaxis to egg.

Those requiring the flu vaccine who have had a previous ICU admission for a severe anaphylaxis to egg should be referred for specialist assessment with regard to vaccine administration in hospital.

Post vaccination observation

As outlined in the anaphylaxis chapter of the Immunisation Guidelines, when possible, patients should remain in the vicinity for up to 15 minutes after vaccination. This applies after any child or adult vaccination because of the very rare possibility of anaphylaxis. To reduce the risk of possible exposure to coronavirus, the person may leave the premises and remain in the vicinity for the remaining minutes provided they (or the parent/ guardian) are given post vaccination advice, and the vaccinated person is accompanied by an adult.

Training and Information material

New HSEland clinical training modules on QIV and aQIV are available together with the two updated modules on LAIV. They are available here: <https://www.hseland.ie>

An NIO training webinar on influenza vaccines can be found here: <https://youtu.be/EgFStvOyzOA>

Further information about the influenza vaccination campaign is available on the National Immunisation website www.hse.ie/flu. The website includes information leaflets, posters, FAQs for health care professionals, quick reference guide and algorithms: www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/pubinfo/flu-vaccination/information/

Recommended Groups for vaccination

As always, the seasonal influenza vaccines supplied by the HSE National Cold Chain Service are **specifically for people in the groups itemised in the attachment with this letter**. Vaccine for those outside of these groups must be purchased privately. There is no change to the target groups recommended for vaccination.

Please note that only household contacts or carers of people who have an underlying chronic health condition or have Down syndrome are eligible to receive an influenza vaccine. A carer is described as someone who is providing an ongoing significant level of care to a person who is in need of care in the home due to illness or disability or frailty e.g. those in receipt of a carer's allowance.

Influenza vaccine is **not recommended** for household contacts of:

- people aged 65 years and older
- pregnant women,
- children aged 2-17 years
- healthcare workers or carers

Vaccine ordering and deliveries

Please order flu vaccines from the HSE National Cold Chain Service (NCCS) using the online ordering system www.order Vaccines.ie, where your vaccine ordering and delivery calendar is available.



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Orders commenced on 20th September 2021, with all sites receiving deliveries by 1st October 2021.

First cycle of deliveries (all sites) will take place 20th September 2021- 1st October 2021

- GPs and pharmacies will be able to order aQIV vaccine for 100% of people aged 65+ years as per 2020/2021 PCRS claims.
- GPs and pharmacies will also be able to order QIV for circa 50% of all those in risk groups aged under 65 years who received injectable vaccine who they made claims for via PCRS
- LTCF will receive aQIV directly where possible

The second cycle of deliveries will take place 4th - 16th October 2021.

- Sites will be able to order any remaining aQIV allocation from the first cycle which they did not already take
- 100% of their PCRS claims from last year for LAIV

The third cycle of fortnightly deliveries will take place 18th - 29th October 2021.

- GPs and pharmacies will be able to order QIV for the remaining 50% of people in risk groups who they claimed for in 2020/2021,
- any previous allocation they have not ordered in previous weeks
- any additional LAIV if they have patients who are requesting it.

For subsequent cycles of deliveries, NIO will assess any residual volumes of vaccine available to ensure equitable distribution.

Patient held vaccination record cards/ post vaccination tear pads will be sent with your vaccine deliveries which should be completed and given to your patients after vaccination.

For enquires about the ordering system you can email customer services at NCCS vaccines@udd.ie or clinical queries can be sent directly to immunisation@hse.ie

The plans for the amounts of flu vaccine available to order and the timing are based on what is known about the deliveries of the flu vaccine from each manufacturer and PCERS claims made by each practice for the 2021/2022 season.

This is the first year that orders for flu vaccine are based on last year's PCERS claims. This is the most equitable way to allocate flu vaccines as all the flu vaccine used for the national flu vaccine campaign was available free of charge to eligible people and so all pharmacies and GPs will have submitted claims for reimbursement for these people.

Fluenz Tetra has a very short shelf life with initial batches expiring mid December 2021. It is important to vaccinate children as soon as possible.

Influenza vaccine communications campaign

The national seasonal flu vaccination programme will focus on three priority areas in 2021/2022:

- Promoting the new Fluad Tetra amongst those 65 years and older.
- Promoting the children's nasal flu vaccine in children aged 2–17
- Raising aware of the importance of getting both the flu and COVID-19 vaccines to protect against the double threat of flu and COVID-19 this winter.



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HSE Communications supports the National Immunisation Office (NIO) each year with a multichannel national communications campaign to promote flu vaccine for those who should get it. There will be use of different media channels and sometimes different messages for the various target groups

The national flu campaign should run alongside the local communications campaigns being organised by CHOs and Hospital Groups each year, which is instrumental in supporting and empowering effective local communications to and between our healthcare teams.

The flu campaign is expected to start in the beginning of October, once all sites have had an opportunity to receive a first delivery. The Initial focus will be on aQIV (week beginning 4th Oct), then LAIV (18th Oct), and lastly QIV for those in risk groups (25th October).

Actions required by you

- ✓ Please remove all influenza vaccines from the 2020/2021 flu season and any other expired vaccines from your fridge 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 they can next take them.
- ✓ Vaccine deliveries will be fortnightly from 20th September so make sure you do not miss the cut-off date for ordering. Ensure you have adequate pharmaceutical fridge space for arriving vaccines.

Yours Sincerely,

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

Dr Lucy Jessop
Director of Public Health
National Immunisation Office
MRCN 424447



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HSE Recommended Groups for Influenza vaccination

- **People 65 years of age and over (recommended aQIV)**
- **Children aged 2 to 17 years (recommended LAIV)**
- **Pregnant women at any stage of pregnancy (recommended QIV)**
- **all those aged 6-23 months and 18-64 years at increased risk of influenza- related complications such as (recommended QIV):**
 - Those with chronic illness:
 - 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
 - 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
 - Children on long-term aspirin therapy (because of the risk of Reye syndrome)
 - 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.** A carer is someone who provides ongoing significant level of care to a person who is in need of care in the home due to illness or disability or frailty.
- **People in regular contact with pigs, poultry or waterfowl**