

HSE NATIONAL IMMUNISATION OFFICE

IMMUNISATION BULLETIN 56

THIS EDITION COVERS

- New NIAC recommendation for adapted COVID-19 booster vaccines
- COVID-19 vaccine intervals
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Possible Adapted COVID-19 vaccine errors
- Vaccine Decommission
- Pneumococcal Polysaccharide Vaccine
- 5 Tips for sending clinical queries to the NIO
- Healthcare worker survey on Influenza and COVID-19 vaccination intention
- Flu Season Bulletin

New NIAC recommendation for adapted COVID-19 booster vaccines

- All those aged 65 years and older require a COVID-19 booster vaccine 4-6 months after their previous COVID-19 vaccine or confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection.
- When possible, adapted COVID-19 vaccines should be given for COVID-19 booster doses.
- An adapted COVID-19 vaccine can be administered at any time in pregnancy for a 1st booster dose. However the 2nd COVID-19 booster vaccine is only recommended from 16 weeks of pregnancy.
 - The National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC) has recommended a booster dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine for all pregnant women. Booster doses should be given 4-6 months after the last COVID-19 vaccine dose or 4-6 months after infection with SARS-CoV-2. If a booster dose has been given in this pregnancy, then another booster dose is not needed. If a booster dose was given before this pregnancy, then the next booster dose should be given at 16 weeks gestation or later.
- Spikevax bivalent Original/Omicron BA.1 (0.5ml/50 mcg) is only recommended for those aged 30 years or older.



Read NIAC recommendations [here](#).

COVID-19 vaccine intervals

- An additional COVID-19 vaccine should be given after an interval of 4 months following the last dose of an authorised COVID-19 vaccine to complete the primary schedule in the immunocompromised.
- An interval of at least 4 months is recommended after the last dose of a COVID-19 vaccine primary schedule or a previous COVID-19 booster vaccine for ALL booster doses.
- An interval of at least 4 months is recommended for those who have had laboratory confirmed/antigen positive COVID-19 breakthrough infection with symptoms since full vaccination.

NIAC advises booster COVID-19 vaccination results in a high level of protection against severe disease that is maintained for 4 months or longer.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is recommended a 3rd booster COVID-19 vaccine now?

- All those aged 65 and older
- All those aged 12 years and older with an immunocompromise associated with a sub optimal response to vaccines

Who is recommended a 2nd booster COVID-19 vaccine now?

- All those aged 50 to 64 years
- All those aged 12 to 49 years who have an underlying medical condition OR are residents of long term care facilities OR who are healthcare workers.
- Those who are at 16 weeks gestation or later if not already boosted in this pregnancy

Can COVID-19 vaccine be given at the same time as the influenza vaccine?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccine may be given at the same time as influenza vaccine but in a different limb.

Possible Adapted COVID-19 vaccine errors

If a bivalent mRNA vaccine is inadvertently administered instead of a primary series dose, the action which should take place depends on which mRNA vaccine was given:

Comirnaty

If either Comirnaty Original/ Omicron BA.1 or Comirnaty Original/ Omicron BA.4-5 vaccine is inadvertently given as a primary series 1st or 2nd dose, the dose can be regarded as a valid dose. However, the primary series should be completed with Comirnaty Original vaccine if the error occurred as the first dose.

Spikevax

If Spikevax bivalent Original/Omicron BA.1 vaccine is inadvertently given as a primary series dose, the dose should be repeated immediately with the 100 microgram Spikevax Original vaccine, because the Spikevax bivalent Original/Omicron BA.1 vaccine dose (50 microgram) is lower than the dose authorised for the primary series. Delaying the repeat dose for 8 weeks after the invalid dose may be considered based on the rare risk of myocarditis and pericarditis from mRNA vaccines. However the individual risk for COVID-19 infection and the likelihood for an adverse event following vaccination should be taken into consideration when recommending a longer interval.

The error should be reported to the HPRA.



For HPRA reporting visit [here](#).

Decommissioning of Vaccines

Since February 2019 all medicines including vaccines require to be “Decommissioned”.

‘Decommissioning’ is the process required to validate that the vaccine has not been falsified and the box has not been tampered.. Since then this process has been completed by NCCS for all vaccines except those vaccines delivered to Hospitals and Pharmacies. COVID-19 vaccines that have been stored in their frozen state and delivered in their thawed state will carry a “Use Before” label affixed to their box. This label has been fixed to the boxes by NCCS and therefore NCCS decommissions these boxes prior to distribution, this includes boxes delivered to Hospitals and Pharmacies.

This change only affects Hospitals and Retail Pharmacies where all boxes (vaccines) were decommissioned by them and this change only affects COVID -19 Vaccines (Comirnaty and Spikevax).

NCCS completes this process for all vaccines (including all routine PCI vaccines, Flu vaccines & COVID-19 vaccines) for GPs.

See EU Directorate:

“Pharmacies, healthcare institutions and other relevant stakeholders in that Member State are nevertheless strongly encouraged to verify the authenticity of and decommission the medicinal product before supplying it to the public”



Read EU Directorate [here](#).

Pneumococcal Polysaccharide Vaccine

Who should be vaccinated with PPV23?

One dose of PPV23 pneumococcal vaccine is recommended for everybody aged 65 years and over and anyone aged 2 years and over with:

- Diabetes
- Chronic lung, heart, liver, or kidney disease
- Chronic neurological disease
- Children aged over 2 years and under 5 years of age with a history of invasive pneumococcal disease
- Coeliac disease
- Down Syndrome
- Cochlear implants or are about to get cochlear implants
- Immune deficiency because of a disease or treatment, including cancer patients
- HIV infection
- Absent spleen or a non-functioning spleen
- CSF leaks, either congenital or complicating skull fractures or neurosurgery
- Intracranial shunt

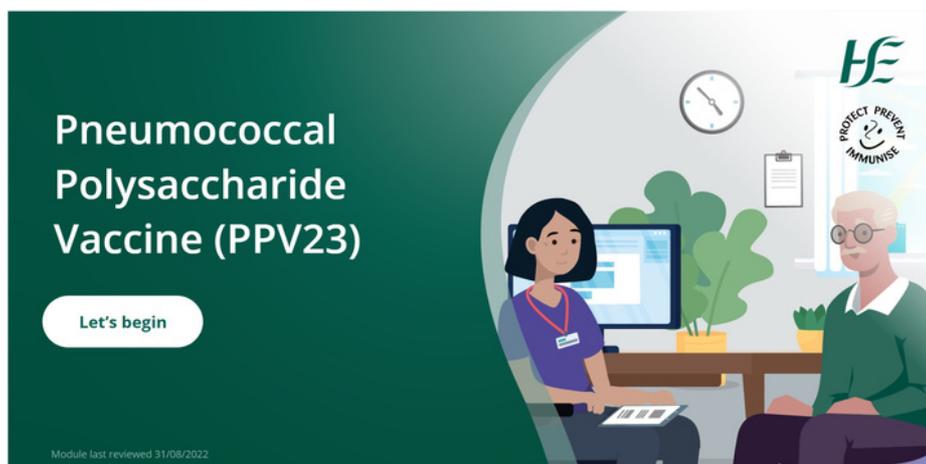
Those aged 65 years and older

One dose of PPV23 pneumococcal vaccine is recommended for anyone aged 65 years or older irrespective of immune status.

Those aged less than 65 years of age

One booster dose of PPV23 pneumococcal vaccine is recommended 5 years after the first vaccination for those in an at risk group aged less than 65 whose antibody levels are likely to decline rapidly e.g. for those who have asplenia, hyposplenism, immunosuppression including HIV infection, chronic renal disease, nephrotic syndrome or renal transplant.

 Read Immunisation Guidelines for Ireland [here](#).



 Complete the HSeLanD training: Pneumococcal Polysaccharide Vaccine (PPV23) [here](#).

5 Tips for sending clinical queries

To date this year we have answered over 6,000 clinical queries, here are our top 5 tips before you send a clinical query to our mailbox.

- 1. Clinical queries should only be sent to immunisation@hse.ie**
The NIO team member on duty will deal with your query.
- 2. Include your full name, your job title and where you work in the body of the email**
The NIO team member on duty will deal with your query.
- 3. Do not include patient identifiable information**
If you do we will have to delete your email and you will need to resend it.
- 4. Include sufficient information to help us to respond to your query**
If sending a catch up query include the information from the patients record about vaccines given previously.
- 5. Do not use the immunisation mailbox for clinical queries that require an immediate answer**
During busy time periods it can take us up to 5 working days to respond.
There is no emergency query phone line or email.

Healthcare worker survey on Influenza and COVID-19 vaccination intention



All healthcare workers in Ireland are invited to participate in a short survey on influenza and COVID-19 vaccination intention which will support planning of HSE immunisation programmes.

This survey is a joint venture between HSE-Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) and HSE-National Immunisation Office (NIO). All healthcare workers are kindly invited to participate including all those based in hospitals, residential care facilities, primary care and in other capacities, including administrative roles.

Take the survey [here](#).

The focus of the survey is on healthcare workers attitudes to vaccination and intention, specifically in relation to key issues with questions based on the 5C model:

1. Confidence in vaccines
2. Constraints in accessing vaccination services
3. Calculation of risks and benefits associated with vaccination
4. Complacency in obtaining additional vaccine doses
5. Collective responsibility and the extent to which vaccinations are accepted with regard to the health and well-being of others

Answers will be anonymous and all information provided through this questionnaire will be used for research purposes only, and the data stored securely and treated with complete confidentiality. The study has been ethically approved and reviewed by the HSE's Committee on Ethical Reviews of Health Related Research Studies.

It should only take 5 to 10 minutes to complete and healthcare workers will be asked questions about themselves and about seasonal influenza and COVID-19 vaccines. The deadline for submission is Friday 23rd December.

For more information about this survey, please contact: piaras.olorcain@hpsc.ie



Flu Season Bulletin

The National Flu Vaccination Campaign began on the 3rd October 2022 and all eligible groups can get the free HSE flu vaccine from their local participating GP or pharmacy.

Flu vaccines can be ordered by vaccination sites at the HSE National Cold Chain Service (NCCS) using the online ordering system ordervaccines.ie, where your calendar is available, indicating order dates and delivery dates.

The 2022/2023 HSE seasonal vaccination programme will offer:

- Quadrivalent live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV), nasal application for those aged 2-17 years. Brand available:
 - Fluenz Tetra nasal spray suspension Influenza vaccine (live attenuated, nasal) manufactured by AstraZeneca AB
- Inactivated quadrivalent influenza vaccine (QIV) available for all other eligible populations including those aged 2-17 with contraindications to LAIV (QIV is licensed for those 6 months of age and older). Two brands of injectable vaccine will be distributed and are interchangeable where two doses are required:
 - Quadrivalent Influenza Vaccine (split virion, inactivated) manufactured by Sanofi Pasteur
 - Influvac Tetra marketed by Mylan

The National Flu Steering Group will be producing regular Flu Bulletins.

Read the Flu Bulletin from National Flu Steering Group [here](#).

Website

Visit our website www.immunisation.ie regularly for the most up to date information to support vaccinators and health professionals responding to queries.

Visit website [here](#).

HSeLanD Vaccination Training Programme

Visit HSeLanD [here](#).

You will find programmes developed by our office by logging into your account on www.hseland.ie selecting **courses** then selecting **clinical skills** and finally selecting **National Immunisation Office**.

Contact HSeLanD [here](#).

If you have any issues with the platform please contact HSeLanD directly.

Do you have queries?

Clinical queries from healthcare professionals can be directed to our dedicated email address

Send your query [here](#).

Should vaccines be exposed to temperatures outside of parameters please contact a National Immunisation Office pharmacist immediately. Contacts include:

- Cliona Kiersey: mobile 087 9915452
- Achal Gupta: mobile 087 4064810

Queries that are not clinical or technical cannot be answered by the National Immunisation Office

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