



Date: 12th October 2021

Circular Number: NCO-08-2021

Seasonal Influenza Vaccination – Winter 2021/2022 and Covid Booster Programme

Dear Doctor,

The seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme for winter 2021/22 was launched at the beginning of October 2021. In order to ensure its efficient implementation and with due regard to the likely demands on GP services during the upcoming autumn/winter period the Covid Booster vaccination Programme commenced at the same time.

Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme Winter 2021/2022

The seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme for Winter 2021/22 commenced on the week of the 4th of October, 2021. Orders for the Influenza vaccines have been made and delivery of same has commenced. The contracted Vaccine distributors have begun contacting practices to agree the scheduling of vaccine deliveries for the 2021/2022 Programme and indeed it is likely that many practices will have received initial contact prior to the receipt of this circular. A copy of the letter from the HSE's National Immunisation Office detailing, inter alia, arrangements for ordering and delivery of flu vaccines is appended hereto for reference purposes.

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

- Flud 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).
- 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 pre-filled 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.

Please note that Influenza vaccines supplied to your practice through the NCSS are only to be administered to the patient groups described above.

The Minister for Health, with the approval of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, has determined that the existing fee rates should be maintained for the administration of the seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme for winter 2021/2022, as follows;

- The fee of €15 will be maintained for all QIV Influenza vaccinations administered (i.e. AQIV and QIV), to patients in the recommended HSE patient groups as described above (GMS and non-GMS);
- In addition to this, each GP will be eligible for a further payment of €100 for every 10 unique patients to whom he/she administers one of the QIV Influenza vaccines;
- A fee of €20 will apply for vaccinations administered using the (nasal) Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine (LAIV) for children aged from 2 to 17 years inclusive;
- In addition, each GP will be eligible for a further payment of €150 for every 10 unique patients aged from 2 to 17 years inclusive to whom he/she administers the LAIV;
- GPs will continue to be eligible for a payment of €28.50 for administration of a Pneumococcal Polysaccharide Vaccine (PPV) to an eligible individual in the relevant at risk group under the GMS provided that the vaccine is not administered by the GP (or by another GP in the same practice) on the same day as an Influenza vaccine.
- The existing fee of €42.75 will continue to apply for the administration of combined Influenza and PPV vaccinations on the same day by the GP or by the GP concerned and another GP in the same practice. Each such instance of combined influenza and PPV vaccination will count as one for the purpose of calculating the level of further adult influenza vaccine payments (as described above) that a GP will be eligible to receive

COVID-19 Related

In line with current NIAC advices the category of patients eligible for Covid Booster vaccines are:

- All persons Over 80 in the community. This group of patients will receive their booster vaccine **in General Practice**.
- All persons over the age of 65 in Nursing Homes and Long Stay Residential Facilities (**to be administered by HSE Vaccine Teams**).



A copy of the letter from the HSE's National Immunisation Office, dated 24th September 2021 is also appended hereto for reference purposes – "Clinical update – COVID-19 Vaccine Booster".

Additionally, in accordance with NIAC advice certain categories of immuno-compromised patients will be offered a 3rd (additional) dose as part of an extended primary vaccination course. The most easily identifiable patients are in general also those at highest risk and are likely to be on regular follow up with hospital specialists (organ transplant, rheumatology, renal, cancer, primary immunodeficiency, HIV). Therefore, the most effective way to identify these patients will be through the hospital system. The majority of these patients will then receive this vaccine in a HSE Community Vaccination Centre. However, GPs may need to assist with a small number of these patients e.g. those taking high-dose or prolonged systemic corticosteroid therapy who are not under the care of a hospital specialist.

I would draw your attention to letter issued to GPs from the HSE's NIO, dated 1st October, 2021 (copy attached hereto), which, inter alia, provides further clarification for GPs in relation to this small number of patients. As the Programme progresses the HSE will be in a position to provide more clinical advice, as required.

Please see the attached "Extended Primary Vaccination Course and Revised Definition of Immunocompromised 08102021.pdf" (which updates the document referred to in the letter dated 1st of October, 2021). For further details of those NIAC consider immunocompromised please see:

Table 5a.2, Chapter 5a on COVID-19 vaccines-

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/hcpinfo/guidelines/covid19.pdf>

I can confirm that the Minister for Health, with the approval of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, has determined that the following fee rates be paid to GPs involved in the delivery of the Covid-19 Vaccination Programme.

- The rate to be paid for vaccinations administered by GPs will remain at €25 per dose.
- The once off registration fee of €10, which applied for the initial registration of payment details, will not be paid in the Booster Programme or for immunocompromised patients given that there is no requirement to reregister patient details on the system.

In determining the fee rates for the seasonal Influenza Vaccination for winter 2021/22, the Covid Booster and the 3rd (additional) Covid Vaccine dose (as part of an extended primary vaccination course) Programmes the Minister had regard once again to the unique clinical, operational and logistical challenges for General Practice in delivering these Programmes at this time. Regard was also had to the special arrangements that GPs may, at their discretion, decide to put in place again this season to deliver the Programmes, such as dedicated vaccination clinics, some of which are likely to be held outside of normal practice surgery hours. For the avoidance of doubt, these clinics are solely for the purposes of administering the vaccine and will not attract an Out of Hours Fee.

I would like once again to express my sincere gratitude to General Practitioners and their teams for their efforts to date in the implementation of the Covid Vaccination Programme this year and for the efficient manner in which the Influenza Vaccination Programme was delivered last season in what were unprecedented and very challenging circumstances. I would also like to wish you and your practice team every success in delivering these vaccination programmes to your patients over the coming months.



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Please be assured of the HSE's continued support at this time.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pat Healy', written over a horizontal line.

Pat Healy
National Director
Clinical Programme Implementation
& Professional Development