



Oifig an Stiúrthóra Cúnta Náisiúnta

Clár Cúraim Pobail Feabhsaithe &

Conarthaí Príomhchúraim

Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte

Urlár 2, Páirc Ghnó Bhóthar na Modhfheirme, Floor 2, Model Business Park,

Bóthar na Modhfheirme, Corcaigh, T12 HT02 Model Farm Road, Cork, T12 HT02

Office of the Assistant National Director

Enhanced Community Care Programme &

Primary Care Contracts

Health Service Executive

Floor 2, Model Business Park,

Model Farm Road, Cork, T12 HT02

[www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

T: 021-4928512

E:

[vaccinations.primarycarecontractors@hse.ie](mailto:vaccinations.primarycarecontractors@hse.ie)

Date: 24<sup>th</sup> August 2023

Reference: NCO-33-2023

## COVID-19 and Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme – Autumn Winter 2023/2024

Dear Doctor,

The autumn / winter campaign 2023/2024 for COVID-19 boosters and Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme is due to commence at the beginning of October. It is aimed, where possible, to provide for co-administration of both vaccines at the same time for eligible individuals.

### **Influenza Vaccination Programme**

The patient groups eligible for HSE free flu vaccine for the 2023/23 season are listed in Appendix 1.

### **Influenza Vaccines & Ordering**

Flu vaccine deliveries will commence as per the National Cold Chain Service (NCCS) vaccine delivery calendar. The order quantity limits are based on the sites usage from previous years. The flu vaccines will be delivered to sites every two weeks.

When flu vaccine becomes available to order you will receive an email notification alerting you to place your order via the NCCS online ordering portal. Please check your online delivery calendar for cut-off times for ordering.

To enable flu vaccinations to commence in October:

- Influvac Tetra (QIV) vaccine deliveries will commence 18<sup>th</sup> September 2023 with all sites that have placed an order on time receiving a delivery by 29<sup>th</sup> September 2023
- Fluenz Tetra (LAIV) vaccine deliveries will commence 25<sup>th</sup> September 2023 with all sites that have placed an order on time receiving a delivery by 6<sup>th</sup> October 2023

### **Influenza Training and Education**

Key resources will be available for vaccinators ahead of the flu season, please see:

- [www.hse.ie/flu](http://www.hse.ie/flu)
- <https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/hcpinfo/fluinfo/>
- [www.hseland.ie](http://www.hseland.ie) Course Catalogue -> Clinical Skills -> National immunisation Office -> Influenza (flu) vaccination
- National Immunisation Advisory Committee Immunisation Guidelines for Ireland Chapter 11 on Influenza. Available [www.immunisation.ie](http://www.immunisation.ie)



### **Children's LAIV (Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine) Programme**

A key Public Health priority is to improve the uptake of flu vaccine in children aged 2-12, and to achieve this a number of initiatives are planned for the upcoming season, including the delivery of LAIV in Primary School settings.

- HSE mobile Vaccination teams will provide the children's LAIV on-site in schools between October & December 2023 to:
  - Senior Infants in primary schools
  - Eligible children in primary age special schools
- The NIO will be facilitating GPs and Community Pharmacies to link with local primary schools to provide on-site LAIV to children in other year groups where possible
- Parents / guardians of all eligible children will be encouraged to avail of the flu vaccine from participating GPs or Community Pharmacies

### **COVID-19 Booster Campaign**

The patient groups recommended for a COVID-19 autumn booster are outlined in Appendix 2.

For full clinical guidance please see

<https://www.rcpi.ie/Portals/0/Document%20Repository/Healthcare%20Leadership/NIAC/CH5a%20COVID-19%2027.04.2023%20Final.pdf?ver=0um90z0gi3e6xSSGAM52Bg%3D%3D>

### **COVID-19 Vaccines and Ordering**

The COVID-19 vaccine to be used for the autumn / winter campaign is yet to be confirmed.

GP practices should not commence ordering for the autumn / winter campaign until further information is available as to which vaccine will be used.

### **COVID-19 Training and Education**

Key resources will be available for vaccinators ahead of the autumn / winter campaign, please see:

NIAC Chapter 5a COVID-19

<https://www.rcpi.ie/Portals/0/Document%20Repository/Healthcare%20Leadership/NIAC/CH5a%20COVID-19%2027.04.2023%20Final.pdf?ver=0um90z0gi3e6xSSGAM52Bg%3D%3D>

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/hcpinfo/covid19vaccineinfo4hps/>



## HSE Vaccination Teams

COVID-19 Community Vaccination Centres (CVCs) have now closed. HSE Vaccination teams will be mobilised from operational bases (at least 2 per CHO).

For the autumn / winter campaign, HSE Vaccination teams will offer the following vaccination services:

- COVID-19 clinics for:
  - Children aged 6 months – 11 years
  - Prisons
- COVID-19 and Flu vaccines for those eligible who are:
  - Residents in Long Term Residential Care Facilities (LTRCFs) including Older Persons, Mental Health and Disability – in a key change from last season, HSE teams will offer both COVID-19 and Flu vaccines to eligible residents in all LTRCFs, and not just those which are HIQA registered
  - Health and Care Workers (HCW) - HSE teams will facilitate clinics in workplace settings for HCWs, with support from peer vaccinators. HCWs can also be vaccinated by their GP.
  - Hard to reach groups
  - Housebound – for housebound referral pathway see:  
<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/gmscontracts/2019agreement/>
  - In-patients in acute hospitals

In addition, HSE mobile teams may set up temporary and pop-up clinics as required during the campaign, to provide COVID-19 and/or Influenza vaccines in local areas to target uptake in particular locations or cohorts. Some operational bases can provide temporary clinics on-site if required.

Aside from the pathways listed above, the majority of COVID-19 boosters and Flu vaccinations will be provided in the community, through GPs and Community Pharmacies.

Eligible individuals who previously attended CVCs for their COVID-19 boosters will now be coming forward to their GP or local Pharmacy; based on trends in uptake rates to date, it is estimated that GPs should plan for **an increase in demand of approximately 10%** compared to last winter for COVID-19 boosters.



**Conclusion**

I would like once again to express my sincere gratitude to General Practitioners and their teams for the efficient manner in which the COVID-19 and Influenza Vaccination Programmes have been delivered to date. I would also like to wish you and your team every success in delivering these vaccination programmes to your patients over the coming months.

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

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. Crowley', written over a horizontal line.

**Geraldine Crowley**  
**Assistant National Director**  
**Enhanced Community Care Programme &**  
**Primary Care Contract**



## Appendix 1:

### **Influenza Vaccination Programme - Eligible Cohorts**

The following groups are eligible for the HSE free flu vaccine in 2023/24:

- All children aged 2-12 years at the time of vaccination
- Persons aged 65 and older
- Pregnant women (at any stage of pregnancy)
- Those aged 6 to 23 months and aged 13-64 years with:
  - 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
  - On long-term aspirin therapy (because of the risk of Reyes syndrome)
  - 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
- Healthcare workers including all General Practice and pharmacy 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

\*\* 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. Household contacts of people aged 65 years and older (who do not also have a chronic health condition), of pregnant women, of children aged 2-12 years or of healthcare workers or carers are not recommended the influenza vaccine unless they are in an at-risk group themselves.

Please note that for children aged 13 to 17 years, only those who are in an at-risk group are eligible in the 2023/24 season cohort.



## Appendix 2:

### **COVID-19 Booster Campaign**

The following groups are recommended by NIAC for an autumn COVID-19 booster:

- those aged 50 years and older
- those aged 5-49 with immunocompromise associated with a suboptimal response to vaccination
- those aged 5-49 with medical conditions associated with a higher risk of COVID-19 hospitalisation, severe disease or death
- those aged 18-49 who, following discussion of their reasons with a health care provider (e.g., GP, pharmacist or vaccination centre), request vaccination.
- health and care workers

In addition, the following groups remain eligible for COVID-19 vaccination throughout the year:

- Primary Courses for those aged 6 months and older
- First booster dose for people aged 18 years and over, or 12 years and over if immunocompromised
- Pregnant women in the appropriate stage of pregnancy and where the appropriate time since last dose of vaccine has elapsed



### Appendix 3: Table of contact details

Query	Telephone	Email	Commentary
Vaccine ordering & deliveries issues – NCCS	(01) 463 7770	<a href="mailto:vaccines@udd.ie">vaccines@udd.ie</a>	Any queries relating to quantity/allocation should be raised through the email address.
Vaccine consumables	081 800 8811	<a href="mailto:vaccine.support@jmc.ie">vaccine.support@jmc.ie</a>	Queries relating to order or delivery of vaccine consumables
Clinical Queries - National Immunisation Office		<a href="mailto:immunisation@hse.ie">immunisation@hse.ie</a>	For clinical queries and queries relating to cold chain maintenance or breakdown, please e-mail.
Data Quality Errors	(01) 240 8786		For Data quality support, please contact the support team.
Payment Queries/Claims	(01) 864 7100	<a href="mailto:Pcrs.doctorsqueries@hse.ie">Pcrs.doctorsqueries@hse.ie</a>	For any payment queries regarding any vaccines. Please do not contact PCRS for registration issues, data quality errors, clinical queries, or queries outside of reimbursement of vaccinations
General queries & relationship management	081 800 8811	<a href="mailto:gpvaccines@vision.com">gpvaccines@vision.com</a>	Other general queries/information, please contact the relationship management team.
Healthmail Issues	(061) 203779	<a href="mailto:ictsupport@three.ie">ictsupport@three.ie</a>	Any queries relating to your Healthmail account including the secondary email address attached to your account.
PCR and Rapid Antigen testing /GP Liaison Team	1800 807113		PCR tests kits & results, PCR pathway, Antigen stock
National Contracts Office	044 9395519	<a href="mailto:natcontractsoffice@hse.ie">natcontractsoffice@hse.ie</a>	For contract queries