



Date: 3rd October 2022

Circular Number: NCO-15-2022

COVID-19 and Seasonal Influenza Vaccination – Winter 2022/2023

Dear Doctor,

The seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme for winter 2022/23 is launching at the beginning of October 2022. In order to ensure its efficient implementation and with due regard to the likely demands on GP services during the upcoming autumn/winter period an extension to the COVID-19 Booster Vaccination Programme is commencing at the same time as the seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme for winter 2022/23. **This will allow co-administration of both vaccines at the same time for eligible groups. Adapted COVID-19 vaccines are now approved and can be ordered in the normal way for booster use only.**

Following the integration of influenza and pneumococcal PPV23 vaccinations into COVAX, it will also be a requirement that GPs use a recognised GP Practice Management System or GPVax to record COVID-19, influenza and pneumococcal PPV23 vaccine administration.

Influenza Vaccination Programme - Winter 2022/2023

The Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme for Winter 2022/23 will commence on the week of the 3rd of October, 2022. Orders for the Influenza vaccines commenced from the 12th of September, with delivery of QIV vaccines commencing from September 19th and LAIV deliveries from October 3rd.

A copy of the letter from the HSE's National Immunisation Office detailing, inter alia, arrangements for ordering and delivery of flu vaccines for reference purposes is available at the following link.

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/hcpinfo/correspondence/gpfluletter2022.pdf>

See also Immunisation Bulletin 55 <https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/infomaterials/newsletter/>

Vaccines & Eligibility

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.

Please note that Influenza vaccines supplied to your practice through the NCCS are only to be administered to the patient groups described in Appendix 1.

Fees

The existing fee rates are being maintained for the administration of the seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme for winter 2022/2023.

- The fee of €15 will be maintained for all QIV Influenza vaccinations administered to patients in the recommended HSE patient groups (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

Vaccines & Eligibility

Adapted COVID-19 vaccines are for booster vaccination only. These vaccines will be supplied to HSE vaccination clinics, GPs and retail Pharmacists:



- Comirnaty® Original/Omicron BA.1 (referred to as Comirnaty® BA.1)
- Comirnaty® Original/Omicron BA.4-5 (referred to as (Comirnaty® BA.4-5)
- Spikevax® Original/Omicron BA.1 (referred to as Spikevax® BA.1).

In line with current NIAC advice the category of patients eligible for an adapted COVID-19 booster vaccine are:

- A second mRNA COVID-19 booster vaccine for:
 - those aged 50-64 years
 - those aged 12–49 years who
 - have underlying medical conditions associated with a higher risk of severe COVID-19
 - are residents of long-term care facilities
- A second mRNA COVID-19 booster vaccine for healthcare workers
- A third mRNA COVID-19 booster vaccine is recommended for:
 - those aged 65 years and older
 - those aged 12 – 64 years with immunocompromise associated with a suboptimal response to vaccines at the time of their primary or booster vaccination
- An additional mRNA COVID-19 booster vaccine is recommended in pregnancy at 16 weeks gestation or later for those who have not received a booster vaccine in the current pregnancy.

As previously advised, the first booster has been recommended for all those aged 12 years and older and may be administered to those who have not received any booster.

There is a high level of overlap between the groups eligible for both the seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme and the extended COVID-19 Booster programme following the recent NIAC advice in July. The HSE's objective is that both of these vaccines are co-administered (which is the most efficient approach) to eligible groups from the formal launch on October 3, 2022.

Adapted COVID-19 vaccines can be ordered online (from September 19th) with deliveries to arrive with the flu delivery or as a separate delivery (where necessary) by October 3.

Please refer to:

<https://rcpi-live-cdn.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/NIAC-Recommendations-re-Additional-COVID-19-Booster-Vaccination.pdf>

Fees

The existing fee rates will 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.

For the avoidance of doubt, there is no registration fee of €10, which applied for the initial registration of payment details, as there is no requirement to re-register patient details on the system.



HSeLanD Vaccination Training Programmes

COVID-19 training - you will find training programmes by logging into your account on www.hseland.ie. Vaccinators should complete the module on HSELanD entitled "New MRNA Vaccine Formulations" prior to the administration of these vaccines.

Influenza training: E-learning modules on LAIV and QIV is available on www.hseland.ie. A new module on pneumococcal (PPV23) vaccination programme has been developed.

Housebound (including new referrals for housebound individuals requiring flu Vaccination)

Please note that for the Autumn/ Winter 2022/ 2023 programme the HSE mobile vaccinations teams will undertake the administration of COVID-19 vaccines and flu vaccines to persons who are housebound. Area Vaccination Teams will make available flu vaccinations to housebound individuals in their area previously referred for COVID-19 vaccination and those who may be newly referred.

Housebound individuals previously referred for COVID-19 Vaccination - Individuals previously referred by their GP for COVID-19 vaccination under the housebound programme who are denoted on CoVax as housebound will be contacted by their Area Vaccination Team in order to organise their flu vaccination (and COVID-19 booster if applicable). In the first instance, the mobile vaccination team will make a phone call offering the flu vaccine to a housebound individual previously referred by their GP for COVID-19 vaccine, if the housebound individual or their carer/ family member agree to receive a flu vaccine it can be administered once the individual meets the eligibility criteria and consent is obtained.

New referrals for housebound individuals requiring flu Vaccination - Area Vaccination Teams will accept new referrals for housebound individuals requiring flu vaccine once the individual meets the housebound criteria. An individual is housebound if they are unable to leave their home at all, or if they require significant assistance to leave the house due to illness, frailty, surgery, disability, mental ill health, or nearing end of life (end of life individuals require a GP / specialist palliative care team referral).

Individuals who are not able to attend their GP Practice, local retail Pharmacist, HSE COVID-19 Vaccination Centre (CVC) or acute hospital vaccination clinic for clinical reasons and for whom this difficulty with attendance cannot be resolved by providing transport may be referred to this pathway.

Referrals will only be accepted once this housebound criterion is met and verified by referring clinicians. **These new referrals can be made through the existing housebound COVID-19 referral pathway by a GP. The GP should note 'flu vaccination' as the vaccination referral type, and send to the healthmail account based on where the individual resides.**

HIQA Registered Nursing Homes

A key change for the 2022/23 season is that HSE mobile vaccination teams will administer the flu vaccine to residents of all HIQA registered Nursing Homes from the 3rd of October. The HSE mobile vaccination teams will continue to administer COVID-19 boosters to this cohort.



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Recording of Vaccine Administration

Please note that it is important to record the administration of all COVID-19 and influenza vaccines promptly so records are kept up to date and two doses are not administered in error.

Conclusion

I would like once again to express my sincere gratitude to General Practitioners and their teams for the efficient manner in which the Influenza Vaccination Programme was delivered last season in what were 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.

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



Appendix 1: Eligibility for a free flu vaccine

People can get a HSE flu vaccine if they are:

- aged 65 years and older
- aged 2 to 17 years
- a healthcare worker
- pregnant
- living in a nursing home or other long-term care facility
- in regular contact with pigs, poultry, or waterfowl
- carers or household contacts of people who have an underlying chronic health condition (listed below) or down syndrome.

People with these conditions can also get a free flu vaccine:

- chronic heart disease, including acute coronary syndrome
- chronic liver disease
- chronic kidney failure
- chronic respiratory disease, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), cystic fibrosis, moderate or severe asthma, or bronchopulmonary dysplasia
- chronic neurological disease including multiple sclerosis, hereditary and degenerative disorders of the central nervous system
- diabetes
- Down syndrome
- haemoglobinopathies
- morbid obesity, which means a body mass index (BMI) over 40
- immunosuppression due to disease or treatment (including asplenia or hyposplenism, and all cancer patients)
- children with a moderate to severe neurodevelopmental disorder such as cerebral palsy
- children on long-term aspirin therapy
- those with any condition that can compromise respiratory function, like spinal cord injury, seizure disorder or other neuromuscular disorder, especially those attending special schools or day centres.