



Date: 5th October 2022

Circular Number: NCO-16-2022

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

Dear Community Pharmacy Contractor,

The seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme for winter 2022/23 formally launched on the week of the 3rd of October 2022. In order to ensure its efficient implementation and with due regard to the likely demands on pharmacy 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.**

Please note that following the integration of influenza and pneumococcal PPV23 vaccinations into COVAX, it is a requirement that pharmacists use PharmaVax 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/pharmacyfluletter2022.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 pharmacy 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 CPC 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 CPC will be eligible for a further payment of €150 for every 10 unique patients aged from 2 to 17 years inclusive to whom the LAIV is administered by the CPC.

COVID-19 Related

Vaccines & Eligibility

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

- 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.

Please note that PharmaVax development is not yet completed to enable the identification of 'de novo' immunocompromised individuals.

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 pharmacies involved in the delivery of the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme.

- The rate to be paid for vaccinations administered by pharmacists 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.

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 are available through the IOP.



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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 vaccinations will continue to administer COVID-19 boosters to this cohort.

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 to once again express the HSE's gratitude to Community Pharmacists and their Teams for their commendable efforts to-date as a key part of the system wide approach to managing this unprecedented public health emergency and I have no doubt that Community Pharmacists and their Teams will not be found wanting when it comes to playing their part in the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme in 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'.

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.