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MEDICAL HEALTH OFFICERS' NEWSLETTER No. 309

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2019-2020 Seasonal Influenza Immunization Campaign

Please see the Island Health (VIHA) web site at: www.islandhealth.ca/flu and click on the “Community Vaccine Provider” button for information about the 2019-2020 Seasonal Influenza Immunization Campaign and vaccine order forms.

Immunization Campaign Dates:

Seasonal influenza vaccine will be delivered to BC in early October. Vaccine will be distributed to physician offices, pharmacists, and other community vaccine providers as it arrives on Vancouver Island. Please place your order for vaccine as soon as possible through your local health unit and plan to begin vaccinating after **October 14** in order to allow time for vaccine to be distributed.

Please place initial orders for the vaccine you intend to use for the **first 2 weeks only** and then place additional orders after that time. If you have organized a large-scale vaccination clinic, also please indicate this on your order form. We ask this to ensure that all community vaccine providers have access to vaccine early in the season in an equitable fashion.

Public health immunization clinics are scheduled to begin the week of October 28, 2019. Please note that public health flu clinics will be focused on providing access to families with children (healthy and those with chronic conditions) and thus some flu clinic locations and times will differ from years past. Adults eligible for influenza vaccination are encouraged to seek immunization from their primary healthcare provider or pharmacist. Pharmacists are not currently certified to provide injectable vaccines to children under 5 years of age.

Vaccines and recommended usage:

This year's influenza vaccine contains strains that have *changed* from last year's vaccine. The vaccine will contain:

- A/Brisbane/02/2018 (H1N1) pdm09-like virus (new)
- A/Kansas/14/2017 (H3N2)-like virus (new)
- B/Colorado/06/2017-like virus
- B/Phuket/3073/2013-like virus (in quadrivalent vaccines only)

BC's influenza immunization program is a targeted program for those at high risk and those at risk of transmitting influenza to high risk individuals. For a full list of eligibility, please consult the Island Health flu webpage or the BCCDC immunization manual.

Four publicly funded vaccine products will be distributed on Vancouver Island for use this season.

Vaccine Product	Recommended Patient Groups	Comments
Agriflu® (trivalent vaccine (TIV))	Adults 18 years + (Can be given to children 6 months +)	Supplied in single dose vials, larger packaging (approximately 10 times larger volume than multidose vials)
Fluviral® (TIV)	Adults 18 years + (Can be given to children 6 months +)	Multidose vials. Once opened, vials can be used for 28 days.
Fluzone® Quadri-valent (QIV)	Recommended for children age 6 months-17 years	Prefilled single syringes (approximately 10 times larger volume than multidose vials).
Flulaval® Tetra (QIV)	Recommended for children age 6 months- 17 years	Multidose vials. Once opened, vials can be used for 28 days.

Please note that Flumist®, the nasal influenza vaccine will NOT be available in Canada this season.

Other seasonal influenza vaccines including Fluzone® High Dose, Flud® and Flud® Pediatric have been approved by Health Canada for this season and may be available for private purchase through pharmacies.

Updates on vaccine usage

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) has recently revised some recommendations for influenza vaccine usage. In brief:

- For children 2-17 years of age, a quadrivalent vaccine is the recommended product (e.g. Fluzone® Quadrivalent OR Flulaval® Tetra) due to the expanded B-strain protection. However, a trivalent vaccine (Agriflu® or Fluviral®) may be given if other vaccine is not available.
- At an individual level (but not programmatic level) NACI has recommended high dose TIV over standard dose TIV for seniors. However, high dose TIV will not be publicly funded in BC this season. Fluzone® High Dose will be available for private purchase in some BC pharmacies. For more information BCCDC has prepared a [FAQ document](#) for healthcare providers at http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Guidelines%20and%20Forms/Guidelines%20and%20Manuals/Immunization/Vaccine%20Info/FluzoneHD_QandA.pdf
- It is safe for egg-allergic individuals to ALL inactivated influenza vaccines. No special administration procedures are needed.

Antiviral Use:

Early antiviral treatment of influenza, particularly for high-risk patients, continues to be recommended when influenza is circulating in the community. Benefits of treatment are much greater with initiation at less than 12 hours than with initiation at 48 hours. (AMMI Canada strong Recommendation, Grade B evidence). Please see the updated AMMI antiviral guidelines for more information (<https://jammi.utpjournals.press/doi/full/10.3138/jammi.2019.02.08>).

Consider providing high risk patients with a prescription for early antiviral treatment before influenza activity peaks to avoid delays in treatment initiation for these patients.

Neuraminidase inhibitors (oseltamivir and zanamivir) remain the recommended drugs of choice for treatment or prophylaxis against influenza A or B for the 2019/20 season. Recommendations on antiviral use may be updated during the influenza season as more clinical information becomes available. Updates will be sent to physicians via the Island Health website and directly by fax/email.

Outbreak Prevention & Management:

During confirmed influenza outbreaks in long term care facilities, physicians may be asked to prescribe antiviral prophylaxis for **residents** (vaccinated and unvaccinated), and sometimes **staff** (particularly unvaccinated staff in prolonged outbreaks). If you have patients in residential care, please ensure that orders are in place for influenza immunization, and PRN orders for antiviral prophylaxis, and creatinine clearance results (within the last year) or tests for residents with suspected or confirmed renal impairment.

Please provide antiviral prophylaxis to **healthcare workers** requesting prophylaxis during an influenza outbreak at their workplace. Be aware that workers who do not take prophylaxis during an outbreak may not be permitted to work, as this can be part of outbreak control measures. Antiviral prophylaxis has been shown to successfully interrupt transmission during facility outbreaks.

Island Health Influenza Protection Policy:

The Island Health Influenza Protection policy is aimed at enhancing patient safety by improving influenza vaccination coverage among health care workers. All healthcare workers in Island Health and Island Health affiliated facilities are expected to comply with the policy this year. There are no anticipated significant policy changes this year. Healthcare workers may receive their influenza immunization from any provider including physicians or pharmacists. Healthcare workers are expected to self report their immunization status to their workplace. Island Health employees and physicians will be reporting immunization status through a centralized website. **All vaccine providers should provide a written record of vaccination to healthcare workers at the time of vaccination** for this season. More information about the policy can be found on the Island Health website.

Resources for physicians & other community providers:

Information documents and links with more detailed information for physicians and other community providers will be available on the Island Health Influenza website (www.islandhealth.ca/learn-about-health/flu-influenza/influenza-information-forms-community-vaccine-providers). The links will include information on:

- 2019-2020 Eligibility for Publicly Funded Vaccine
- Vaccine Product Information from BCCDC including dosage and composition
- Antiviral Guidelines for general use and in Long Term Care facilities
- Laboratory Diagnosis of Influenza

Important forms will also be posted on the Island Health Influenza website including:

- Influenza Vaccine order forms
- Influenza Vaccine reporting form (fridge count) to be submitted by community vaccine providers by mid-January, 2020

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