

WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Issue Date: 28 November 2019

STATUS: ACTION

CATEGORY: PUBLIC HEALTH

Title: Ordering influenza vaccines for the 2020-2021 season

Date of Expiry / Review N/A

For Action by:

General Practitioners
Pharmacists
Chief Executives, Health Boards/Trusts

For information to:

Medical Directors, Health Boards/Trusts
Nurse Executive Directors, Health Boards/Trusts
Directors of Public Health, Health Boards/Trusts
Immunisation Leads, Health Boards
Immunisation Coordinators, Health Boards
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Sender:

Chief Medical Officer for Wales

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Enclosure(s): None

Dear Colleague,

This year's influenza vaccination campaign has been very challenging as a consequence of supply issues delaying deliveries of some vaccines. I would like to thank everyone involved in the programme for the additional work being undertaken, in particular, general practice staff, community and health board pharmacy staff, school nursing teams and those involved in the health and social care staff campaign, who have supported and provided reassurance to patients, parents, children and colleagues.

Many of you will have already started planning for next season. This letter provides advice on ordering supplies of influenza vaccine for 2020-2021. It is based on advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). The JCVI's statement on influenza vaccines for the 2020-2021 season can be found [here](#).

To ensure that as many people as possible in eligible groups can be offered the recommended vaccines, it is crucial that a sufficient stock of appropriate vaccine is secured. This will help enable maximum vaccine uptake, whilst minimising unnecessary waste. It is important to provide individuals with a vaccine that offers the best protection for them, and vaccine choice will be influenced by age and risk group.

Vaccine recommendations for 2020-21 are:

Adults 65 years of age and over

- Adjuvanted trivalent influenza vaccine (aTIV)
- High-dose trivalent influenza vaccine (TIV-HD) - see below

These vaccines are considered equally suitable for use in those aged 65 years and over, and are preferable to standard egg based trivalent and quadrivalent influenza vaccines (TIVe/QIVe).

Under the updated Influenza Directed Enhanced Services (Directions) issued in August 2019, reimbursement will only be made for effective vaccines as recommended in this circular. Whilst the TIV-HD is an effective vaccine, its high cost would require significantly more NHS funding compared to the equally effective alternative and so **the TIV-HD is not recommended for routine use in the national NHS flu programme.**

The quadrivalent influenza cell-culture vaccine (QIVc) is suitable for use in this age group if aTIV or TIV-HD are not available.

At-risk adults aged 18 to 64 years (including pregnant women)

- Quadrivalent cell culture influenza vaccine (QIVc)
- Quadrivalent egg based influenza vaccine (QIVe)

These vaccines are considered equally suitable for use in adults under 65 years of age and in an at-risk group (subject to licensed age indications).

Children

The JCVI advice on flu vaccines for children is unchanged:

- LAIV (live attenuated quadrivalent influenza vaccine) is the recommended vaccine for use in all eligible children aged 2-17 years of age unless contraindicated. See further details below.
- Eligible children contraindicated LAIV should be offered a suitable licensed injectable quadrivalent influenza vaccine. (QIVc is currently licensed for children from 9 years of age).
- Children aged 6 months to under 2 years of age in a clinical risk group should be offered a suitable licensed injectable quadrivalent influenza vaccine.

NHS Wales Health Board and Trust Staff

Health boards and trusts should order sufficient injectable vaccine for staff with direct patient contact as follows:

- Quadrivalent cell culture influenza vaccine (QIVc)
- Quadrivalent egg based influenza vaccine (QIVe)

Workers in adult residential care and nursing homes (including hospices) and domiciliary care staff

Community pharmacies participating in the NHS flu immunisation programme for care workers should order sufficient supplies of injectable quadrivalent vaccine:

- Quadrivalent cell culture influenza vaccine (QIVc)
- Quadrivalent egg based influenza vaccine (QIVe)

Children's Immunisation Programme

The 2020-2021 children's flu immunisation programme will offer LAIV to children aged 2 years to school year 6 (includes all primary school aged children). For the small number of eligible children for whom LAIV is unsuitable, a suitable injectable quadrivalent influenza vaccine should be offered.

Contraindications and precautions

Healthcare practitioners should refer to the "Green Book" influenza chapter for full details on contraindications and precautions for flu vaccines. This can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/influenza-the-green-book-chapter-19>

Ordering Injectable Influenza Vaccine

This season and in 2018-19, there have been staggered deliveries of certain vaccines due to manufacturing issues. To reduce the risk of vaccine shortages for at risk individuals it is recommended that orders for injectable flu vaccine are placed with more than one supplier where possible. Practices and pharmacies should liaise within clusters to help ensure that alternative vaccines are available locally.

Health boards should ensure that practices and pharmacies have equal opportunity to order alternative effective vaccines.

General Practices

General practices should aim to increase influenza vaccine uptake in eligible groups each year and order sufficient vaccine to protect:

- at least 75% of their patients aged 65 years and older;
- at least 55% of those under 65 years who are in an at risk group;
- unpaid carers;
- all pregnant women;
- children aged six months to under two years old who are in an at risk group;
- the very small number of children aged two to 17 years in an at risk group but contraindicated live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV);
- the small number of primary school aged children contraindicated LAIV;
- children in other eligible groups;
- practice staff.

The eligible groups notified for the 2020-21 season are expected to remain unchanged. Any changes will be notified as appropriate.

It is projected that there will be approximately 1.5% more people in Wales aged 65 years and older next winter. Therefore additional vaccine needs to be ordered simply to maintain the same uptake as this year and this increase should be taken into consideration when ordering vaccines.

Community Pharmacies

Community pharmacies will again be invited to support the campaign in 2020-21 via the Community Pharmacy Influenza Vaccination Scheme. Health boards should seek to make arrangements with any community pharmacy in

its area that meets the standards described in the nationally agreed enhanced service specification.

Health boards should identify and build on examples of good practice where GP practices and community pharmacy partners have worked together to develop a co-ordinated approach that strengthens local arrangements, removes barriers to vaccine access and improves vaccine uptake in eligible groups.

Continuing Vaccination in the Current Season

Thank you for your continued support to increase influenza vaccination uptake and protect more people from this potentially serious vaccine preventable disease.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frank Atherton', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Dr Frank Atherton
Chief Medical Officer / Medical Director NHS Wales