

WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Issue Date: 29 March 2022

STATUS: ACTION

CATEGORY: PUBLIC HEALTH

Title: Reimbursable vaccines and eligible cohorts for the 2022/23 NHS Seasonal Influenza (flu) Vaccination Programme

Date of Expiry / Review: Not applicable

For Action by:

General practitioners
Community pharmacists
Chief Executives, Health Boards/Trusts
Immunisation Leads, Health Boards/Trusts
Immunisation Coordinators, Health Boards
Flu Leads, Trusts
Medical Directors, Health Boards/Trusts
Directors of Primary Care, Health Boards/Trusts
Nurse Executive Directors, Health Boards/Trusts
Chief Pharmacists, Health Boards/Trusts
Directors of Public Health, Health Boards/Trusts
Executive Director of Public Health, Public Health Wales
Head Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme, Public Health Wales
Community Pharmacy Wales
General Practitioner Council, Wales

Sender: Chief Medical Officer for Wales

HSSG Welsh Government Contact(s):

Health Protection Services, Department for Public Health, Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF10 3NQ

Dear Colleague

The annual flu vaccination programme is a strategic priority for Welsh Government.

In 2021-22 influenza vaccination was administered to more people than ever before as part of the annual programme in Wales. Influenza activity levels were low globally as a result of continued interventions put in place throughout the winter of 2021-22 to protect against COVID-19 (such as mask-wearing, social distancing and reduced international travel)

Uptake of the flu vaccine should be maximised again in 2022-23. We need to be prepared for higher levels of influenza activity and the possibility that it could be a more severe influenza year, with more of the population susceptible to influenza given the low levels in previous seasons. Achieving a high uptake is vital to reduce morbidity and mortality associated with influenza, and to reduce hospitalisations during a time when the NHS and social care may also be managing winter outbreaks of COVID-19.

Priority cohorts

Groups who are most at risk from influenza and of catching influenza and infecting other members of the community, remain the priority for next season.

The groups eligible for a flu vaccine as part of the routine national flu programme 2022-23 are:

- children aged two and three years on 31 August 2022
- children in primary school from reception class to year 6 (inclusive)
- children in secondary school from year 7 to year 11 (inclusive)*
- people aged six months to less than 50 years in clinical risk groups**
- people aged 50 years and older
- all adult prison residents
- pregnant women
- carers
- people with a learning disability
- staff in nursing homes and care homes with regular client contact
- staff providing domiciliary care.
- staff providing frontline NHS/Primary care services*
- healthcare workers (including healthcare students) with direct patient contact

*Funding for children in secondary school from year 7 to year 11 (inclusive) and for staff providing frontline NHS/Primary care services will move into health boards core budgets and become part of the routine annual flu vaccination programme in Wales.

**For the 2022-23 season there is the potential for alignment with COVID-19 risk groups. Further details will be contained in the CMO's annual flu letter which will be published in the summer.

Plans for another expanded season

General practices, community pharmacies and health boards/trusts should plan to order their influenza vaccine to match the high levels of uptake achieved in 2021-22.

Guidance on ordering supplies of influenza vaccines for the 2022-2023 is below and is based on advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation ([JCVI](#)).

In addition to the priority groups mentioned above the JCVI has advised that it would be **acceptable to vaccinate 50-64 year olds not in a risk category for the 2022/23 season**, however they would be the lowest priority amongst the identified risk groups. Therefore people aged **50 to 64 years** will again be eligible for NHS influenza vaccination in Wales in 2022/23. This extended cohort is included for another year due to uncertainty around likely influenza activity for the next season, with continued risk of co-circulation of influenza and COVID-19.

The JCVI has given an indication that there is likely to be an autumn booster programme for COVID-19 vaccinations. In their interim advice, in February 2022, the Committee acknowledged that winter remains the season when the threat from COVID-19 is greatest both for individuals and for health communities, especially for older people and those in clinical risk groups. As a result, opportunities for co-administration for COVID-19/ flu vaccination may arise throughout the 2022-23 season and those planning and administering vaccines should utilise these opportunities where appropriate, to help maximise vaccine uptake.

Vaccines reimbursed as part of the NHS immunisation programme 2022-23

The following table provides updated advice on recommended vaccines for 2021-22 which will be eligible for reimbursement.

Those aged 65 years and over	Those aged 18 to less than 65 years (including pregnant women)	Children aged 2 to less than 18 years who are contraindicated/decline LAIV
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• aQIV• QIVr• (QIVc where aQIV/QIVr is not available)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• QIVc• QIVr• QIVe (where QIVc or QIVr is not available)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• QIVc• QIVe

Key:

aQIV - adjuvanted quadrivalent influenza vaccine

QIVc - quadrivalent cell culture influenza vaccine

QIVr - quadrivalent recombinant influenza vaccine

QIVe - quadrivalent influenza egg-culture vaccine

For the children's programme, the guidance for 2022-23 is:

- Live attenuated quadrivalent influenza vaccine (LAIV) is the recommended vaccine for use in all eligible children aged 2-17 years of age unless contraindicated or declined due to gelatine content. LAIV is supplied centrally.
- Where an injectable vaccine is offered as an alternative to LAIV in the circumstances described, it will be eligible for reimbursement.
- Children under 2 years of age are recommended quadrivalent influenza egg-culture vaccine (QIVe). Vaccine supply requirements to vaccinate children under 2 years should be arranged locally.

Manufacturers will start to produce volumes of vaccines shortly based on the orders they have received. Please submit your order as soon as possible.

General practices, community pharmacies and health boards/trusts should review influenza vaccine orders in light of this update to attain levels of uptake at least equivalent to those achieved in 2021-22.

There may be further policy developments to support maximum uptake across all eligible cohorts during 2022-23. Further advice will be communicated as soon as possible in the Chief Medical Officer's annual influenza letter, which will be issued in the summer.

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

Appendix A

To: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership to forward to:

All General Practitioners - please ensure this message is seen by all practice nurses and non-principals working in your practice and retain a copy in your 'locum information pack'.

All Community Pharmacies
Deputising Services

To: Health Boards and NHS Trusts:

Chief Executives
Medical Directors
Nurse Directors
Directors of Public Health
Chief Pharmacists
Directors of Primary, Community and Mental Health
Immunisation Coordinators

To: Public Health Wales:
Chief Executive
Director of Public Health Services
Consultants in Communicable Disease Control
Head Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme

Cc: GPC (Wales)
RCGP (Wales)
Community Pharmacy Wales
Royal Pharmaceutical Society Wales

Enclosure(s): None