

To: Nova Scotia Immunization Providers

From: Dr Ryan Sommers, Senior Medical Director Nova Scotia Health

Date: October 3, 2023

Re: Fall/Winter 2023/24 Influenza and COVID-19 Immunization Campaigns

We appreciate the important role of providers who protect patients, communities, and healthcare facilities during the respiratory season by organizing vaccine clinics, promoting the uptake of both influenza and COVID-19 vaccines, and championing these safe and effective public health interventions.

The 2022/23 influenza season began earlier than usual last year and substantially impacted the elderly and children and placed significant strain on the healthcare system's capacity. COVID-19 activity continues to remain low to moderate across Canada, with recent increasing trends reported following historic lows. The elderly continue to be at the highest risk of severe disease. SARS-CoV2 virus continues to evolve, and nationally XBB sub-lineages remain dominant. The updated formulation of the COVID-19 vaccine for fall/winter will be based on the XBB variant.

Fall/Winter Respiratory Immunization Campaign

COVID-19 and influenza vaccines will become available for the fall campaign throughout October. Both vaccines can be safely administered at the same appointment. Providing them at the same time facilitates the uptake of both. While COVID-19 and influenza vaccines will be offered for free to anyone 6 months and older, vaccination is particularly recommended for certain populations, as per the table below. The [CANImmunize platform](#) will support online appointment booking and appointments will be posted as they become available.

Influenza Vaccine Highlights

This fall, everyone 65 years and older can receive **high-dose influenza vaccine** for free. All others can receive a standard dose quadrivalent influenza vaccine. Children 9 years and younger who have never received an influenza vaccine need two doses four weeks apart. If they only received one dose of vaccine in a previous year, they only require one dose.

COVID-19 Vaccine Highlights

This fall, everyone 6 months and older who has previously completed the primary series can receive a dose of the updated XBB.1.5 monovalent COVID-19 vaccine. This dose should be given at least 6 months since a previous dose or known SARS-CoV-2 infection (whichever is later). [Moderna XBB.1.5 vaccine](#) can also be used for individuals who have

never been vaccinated using the current NACI recommended 2-dose schedule for all ages (3 doses for moderately to severely immunocompromised). Moderna XBB.1.5 is a 2.5 mL multi-dose vial for use in all authorized ages, with a dosage of 25 mcg (0.25 mL) for 6 months to <12 years and 50 mcg (0.5mL) for 12 years and older.

Once Moderna XBB.1.5 COVID-19 vaccine is available, Moderna original and all bivalent vaccines will be discontinued for any use. The updated Pfizer XBB.1.5 vaccine is now authorized but is not yet available in Nova Scotia; it is expected in late October. The updated formulation of Novavax is not currently authorized. Information on the use of Pfizer and Novavax updated vaccines will be shared as it becomes available. New formulation mRNA vaccines remain preferred.

Ordering and supply:

Influenza and COVID-19 vaccines are received in a series of shipments so you will not receive your entire allotment at once. Influenza vaccine can be ordered from the Bio Depot through Shopify during 3 order windows until the end of October. There will also be at least 3 order windows for COVID-19 vaccine. A vaccine fridge temperature log is required to input the order. Faxed orders will not be accepted.

Providers should only plan for clinics once you know your vaccine allotment, and appointments should not be posted until you confirm when the vaccines will be available to your office/pharmacy. High-dose influenza packaging is much larger than seasonal vaccines because it comes in prefilled syringes. It is anticipated that there will be a need for increased vaccine storage space.

Documentation and Coverage Assessment:

To assist with vaccine coverage assessment, please document vaccine administration into Electronic Medical Records (EMRs), including the agent as per vaccine inventory (i.e., Inf-Quad not Inf-unspecified), the trade name, and the lot number. If you have questions regarding the entry of influenza or other vaccines, please contact panorama@novascotia.ca.

Thank you for your efforts to protect our patients, communities, and health care facilities throughout the respiratory season.

Sincerely,



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Public Health and Preventive Medicine Physician

Table: Groups for whom vaccines are particularly recommended

COVID-19 vaccine	Influenza vaccine
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults aged 65 years and older • People living in long-term care or other congregate living settings, including chronic care homes • People who are pregnant • People living with certain high-risk medical conditions* • Individuals in or from First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities • People who provide essential community services 	
Members of racialized and other equity-deserving communities	Children aged 6 to 59 months
	Household contacts of individuals at high risk
	People providing child-care to children under the age of 5 years
	People who provide services in closed settings to people at high risk (e.g., crew on a cruise ship)
	People who have direct contact with poultry infected with avian influenza during culling operations

* For a list of high-risk medical conditions, see [COVID-19 signs, symptoms, and severity of disease: A clinician guide](#) for COVID-19 and [Immunization of Persons with Chronic Diseases](#) and [Immunization of Immunocompromised Persons](#) in Part 3 of the Canadian Immunization Guide for influenza.

For more information refer to:

[Publicly Funded Seasonal Inactivated Influenza Vaccine Information for Health Care Providers 2023-24](#)

[National Advisory Committee on Immunization \(NACI\) statement: Seasonal influenza vaccine for 2023-2024 - Canada.ca](#)

[The Nova Scotia COVID-19 Vaccine Program: Information for Health Care Professionals](#) (will be updated as vaccines become available)

NACI's [Guidance on the use of COVID-19 vaccines in the fall of 2023](#) and [Addendum statement](#).