

To: Nova Scotia Immunization Providers
From: Dr. Shelley Deeks, Deputy Chief Medical Officer of Health
Date: September 26, 2024
Re: ***2024-25 Publicly Funded Respiratory Immunization Campaigns***

Providers play a critical role each respiratory season by administering vaccines and promoting their uptake. This memo provides an overview of the upcoming respiratory virus immunization campaigns including several new items this year.

RSV immunization program: New this year

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) causes substantial morbidity, and places extensive burden on the health system every respiratory season. Although most infections in adults are self-limited, RSV can result in severe disease, including pneumonia and bronchiolitis, leading to hospitalization.

The [National Advisory Committee on Immunization \(NACI\)](#) has provided guidelines for the use of RSV vaccines in Canada and recommends vaccine for adults 60 years and older who are residents of nursing homes and other chronic care facilities, as well as all adults 75 years and older, particularly those at increased risk of severe disease. RSV vaccines are given as a single dose by intramuscular injection. Unlike COVID-19 and influenza vaccines, they do not change based on circulating strains and are not given annually. One dose of RSV vaccine has been shown to offer protection against disease for at least 2 respiratory seasons. In this respiratory season, Nova Scotia will be offering Abrysvo® as a publicly funded RSV vaccine for individuals 60 years and older residing in long term care facilities and hospital inpatients awaiting placement into long term care.

Influenza and Vaccine Highlights

[NACI](#) recommends either Fluvad® adjuvanted vaccine or High Dose Fluzone® as an **enhanced influenza vaccine** for individuals 65 years and older to prevent influenza, as both have been shown to be more effective than standard dose vaccine in this population. Nova Scotia will be offering Fluvad® vaccine for people 65 years and older this season. Individuals under 65 years are eligible to receive standard dose influenza vaccine. Children 6 months to 9 years who have never received an influenza vaccine require 2 doses four weeks apart to be fully vaccinated.

[NACI](#) continues to recommend that all individuals 6 months and older receive an authorized, age-appropriate seasonal influenza vaccine. It is particularly important that populations at increased risk, or capable of transmitting influenza to those at high risk, (see [Table](#)) receive the vaccine annually. Especially important this season, this includes people likely to have significant exposure to influenza A(H5N1) through interactions with

birds or mammals (such as poultry, livestock, slaughterhouse and processing plant workers, wildlife officers/researchers, and veterinarians). Although influenza vaccines do not provide protection against infection with influenza A(H5N1) viruses, they may reduce the risk of seasonal human and influenza A(H5N1) virus co-infection and possible viral reassortment leading to a human-transmissible virus with pandemic potential.

COVID-19 and Vaccine Highlights

SARS-CoV2 virus continues to evolve, and seasonality has not yet been established. KP.2 sub-lineages are currently dominant nationally and the new formulation of COVID-19 vaccines will target the KP.2 variant. This respiratory season, everyone 6 months and older can receive a dose of the updated formulation of KP.2 COVID-19 vaccine. It is particularly important that people at increased risk of COVID-19 (see [Table](#)) be immunized. A single dose is recommended for those who have previously been immunized. For unimmunized individuals, the number of doses required depends on age and underlying health status (see [Publicly Funded Respiratory Virus Immunizations: Information for Health Care Providers 2024-25](#)). The recommended interval is 6 months from the last COVID-19 vaccine dose, however, a shorter interval of at least 3 months may be used.

Both Moderna and Pfizer KP.2 COVID-19 vaccine will be available in Nova Scotia this season and either can be used in people 12 years and older. However, only Moderna vaccine will be available for children 6 months to 12 years. Novavax vaccine will not be available in 2024-25.

Availability and Concurrent Administration

COVID-19 and influenza vaccines will become available for this season throughout October and RSV vaccines will become available in November. All of these vaccines can be given concurrently and this should be considered wherever possible as it facilitates vaccine uptake.

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* • Indigenous Peoples • People who provide essential community services (including health care workers) 	
Members of racialized and other equity-deserving communities	Children aged 6 to 59 months of age
	Household contacts of individuals at high risk including contacts of infants <6 months and those expecting a newborn during influenza season
	People providing child-care to children <5 years
	Those who provide services within closed or relatively 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 [Disease severity and risk factors for severe disease](#) and [Immunization of Persons with Chronic Diseases](#) for COVID-19 and [Immunization of Immunocompromised Persons](#) for influenza.

For more information refer to:

[Publicly Funded Respiratory Virus Immunizations: Information for Health Care Providers 2024-25](#)

[Publicly Funded Vaccine/ Immunoglobulin Eligibility Policy](#)