

WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Title: Ordering influenza vaccines for the 2019-20 season

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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
Executive Director of Public Health, Public Health
Wales
Head VPD Programme, Public Health Wales
Royal College of GPs
Royal College of Nursing
Royal College of Midwives
Royal Pharmaceutical Society
Community Pharmacy Wales
British Medical Association, Wales
General Practitioner Council, Wales

Sender:

Chief Medical Officer for Wales

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Enclosure(s): None

Dear Colleague,

My sincere thanks to everyone involved in the delivery of this year's influenza immunisation campaign given the challenging issues with vaccine supplies. I acknowledge the impact that the phased nature of the vaccine deliveries has had, particularly at general practices. I am grateful for the additional work practice staff, pharmacy staff and others have been undertaking to support and provide reassurance to patients.

As many of you will have already started planning for next season, this letter provides advice on ordering supplies of influenza vaccine for the 2019-20 season, supported by advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).

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 to enable maximum uptake, whilst minimising unnecessary wastage. It is important to provide the vaccine that offers the best protection for individuals of different ages in the various risk groups.

The JCVI has reviewed the latest evidence on influenza vaccines. The advice below represents the scientific advice on the use of influenza vaccines in the UK for the 2019-20 influenza season. This advice includes vaccines anticipated for licensing during the ordering window for the 2019-20 influenza season.

Influenza vaccines should only be considered for use in the relevant populations once licensed. The high-dose trivalent influenza vaccine (TIV-HD) and quadrivalent influenza cell culture vaccine (QIVc) are not yet licensed and cannot currently be ordered. We will write to you again when these products are licensed and list price agreed.

The new vaccines are not recommended in preference to those currently available but are offered as an alternative to the vaccines now available and recommended for the various at risk groups.

Adults 65 years of age and over

For vaccination of those aged 65 years and over the JCVI advises the use of:

- Adjuvanted trivalent influenza vaccine (aTIV)
- High-dose trivalent influenza vaccine (TIV-HD)
- Quadrivalent cell culture influenza vaccine (QIVc)

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).

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

For vaccination of those aged 18 to 64 years in at risk groups, the JCVI advises the use of:

- 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). These vaccines are preferable to standard trivalent egg based influenza vaccines (TIVe).

Children (including those for whom there are contraindications for use of LAIV)

The JCVI's advice on vaccines for children is unchanged as follows:

- 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.
- 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)

Social care workers in adult residential care and nursing homes (including hospices)

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

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

Children's Immunisation Programme

The 2019-20 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.

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:

Ordering Injectable Influenza Vaccine

Each general practice should aim to increase influenza vaccine uptake 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;
- 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;
- those in other eligible groups.

The eligible groups notified for the 2018-19 season are expected to remain unchanged. Any further changes will be notified as soon as possible.

It is projected that there will be approximately 1.5% more people in Wales aged 65 years and older next season. 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 vaccine.

Community Pharmacists

Community pharmacies will again be invited to support the campaign in 2019-20 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 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 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