

Alberta Public Health Activities Program (APHAP) **Alberta Influenza Immunization Program 2021/2022**

This season's provincially funded Alberta Influenza Immunization Program begins for the general public on **October 18, 2021**. For those pharmacies participating in the Alberta Outreach Program, immunizers can begin to immunize individuals as soon as the initial influenza vaccine is available.

Pharmacist participation in the provincially funded influenza immunization program is guided by:

- the Alberta Government Influenza Immunization Policy (IIP), which has been updated and can be accessed at **open.alberta.ca/dataset/alberta-influenza-immunization-policy**,
- the Alberta College of Pharmacy (ACP) Standards of Practice for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians and the Standards for the Operation of Licensed Pharmacies, and
- the Ministerial Order - Compensation Plan for Pharmacy Services.

The Alberta Pharmacists' Association has updated the influenza immunization education program for 2021 and 2022, which supports pharmacists in understanding the IIP. The education program, titled ***The Yearly Booster Seasonal Influenza Vaccine Program 2021-2022***, should be completed prior to administering influenza vaccine.

Influenza immunization service delivery will focus on increasing the immunization rates for high-risk populations who are most at risk for morbidity and mortality due to influenza disease.

Certain populations, such as young children, older adults and those with chronic health conditions, are at higher risk for serious influenza complications such as viral pneumonia, secondary bacterial pneumonia and worsening of underlying medical conditions.

Administering and claiming

Pharmacies must order vaccine judiciously. A sufficient supply of vaccine is available for pharmacies and the vaccine arrives in the province in a series of shipments.

Influenza vaccine is distributed to pharmacies through Pharmacy Wholesale Distributors (PWD) in collaboration with Alberta Health.

For PINs and claiming info, please see the ***Reference Guide for Administering and Claiming Influenza Vaccines*** and the ***Alberta Health Influenza Antiviral Drug Policy as applied to Vulnerable Populations Living in Congregate Living Settings*** for additional details.

Key updates for this year—COVID-19 policy, Alberta Vaccine Inventory Reporting Process, Alberta Vaccine Booking System

COVID-19 policy—consideration for spacing with COVID-19 vaccine is required

Influenza immunization is a high priority due to the potential of influenza viruses co-circulating with COVID-19 and the additive effects of concurrent circulation of influenza on health care and public health system capacity.

Influenza and COVID-19 vaccines can be administered at the same time. 14 day spacing is required between the COVID-19 vaccine and LIVE vaccines only. Review of the client's immunization record is required prior to the administration of either vaccine.

Influenza immunization service delivery will need to be adapted to include measures to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 such as:

- venue set up and clinic operations where influenza immunizations will be offered,
- environmental infection prevention and control processes at venues and clinics,
- infection prevention and control for health practitioners,
- post immunization after-care guidance,
- considerations for alternate models of service delivery, and
- considerations when immunizing in supportive or congregate living facilities.

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PHARMACY BENEFACT

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Alberta Vaccine Inventory (AVI) Reporting Process

To safeguard vaccine accountability and visibility, the AVI system will be used for provincial inventory management for influenza vaccines, as well as COVID-19 vaccines (additional provincially funded vaccine will be added at a later date). If your pharmacy has not already enrolled in AVI for the COVID immunization program and intends to participate in the Alberta IIP, please complete enrolment by accessing forms.gle/LLhtdFGdVu1w8Bw47.

IMPORTANT: pharmacies enrolled after **September 25, 2021**, will not be able to receive the initial pipeline fulfilment of the influenza vaccine.

Pharmacies will be required to access the AVI system to receive transfers of vaccine from the pharmacy wholesale distributors (the wholesaler will have 48 business hours to complete the transfer in AVI) and on a weekly basis to reconcile the inventory. A physical count of your on-hand quantities and a reconciliation amount must be completed every Sunday, no later than 9 p.m. to fulfil required reporting to Alberta Health.

Training materials are posted online that outline the processes for accessing AVI, receiving transfers and reconciling inventory. Please visit the **AVI homepage (vimsavi.alberta.ca/prod/main.jsp)** for all quick reference guides on how to use AVI.

The on-hand quantities reported in AVI will be used to manage vaccine inventory in the province and accuracy is essential to managing the distribution of influenza vaccine in the province.

As a condition of participation in the Alberta immunization programs, pharmacies must:

- always check that the AVI transfer quantity, lot number and expiry match the physical shipment and invoice before accepting it.
- receive transfers in AVI within 48 hours of receiving physical shipment or as soon as the transfer is available/visible in AVI.
 - If a vaccine shipment is received on Thursday or Friday from the wholesaler, it may not be transferred by the wholesaler in AVI for the Sunday deadline for reconciliation. Please reconcile the inventory on hand and accept the transfer once visible.
- notify the wholesale distributor and reject the transfer if there is an error.
- reconcile their inventory after accepting any transfers.

If a pharmacy fails to manage and update inventory in AVI, such as receiving transfers and weekly reconciliation, Alberta Health will review whether the pharmacy should be removed or suspended from participating the Alberta immunization programs.

Alberta Vaccine Booking System

In addition, the Alberta Vaccine Booking System (AVBS) will also be used for the Alberta IIP. The AVBS is a centralized portal for all vaccine appointment bookings. Pharmacies participating in the Alberta IIP are required to use the AVBS. This single platform will support Albertans booking an influenza vaccine appointment at a community pharmacy or an Alberta Health Services clinic.

Pharmacies that have not already enrolled in AVBS as part of the COVID immunization program will need to complete AVBS enrolment. Enrolment for the AVBS was paused on July 30 and will open again mid-September, although enrolment forms can still be submitted. Please visit ab.bluecross.ca/providers/pharmacy-alberta-vaccine-booking-system.php for the AVBS enrolment form and information.

Once enrolled, each pharmacy will be required to create an influenza vaccine appointment schedule. Community pharmacies will be able to continue accepting walk-ins for Influenza vaccines; however, appointments should be made available for Albertans to book. Walk-ins will not need to be documented in the AVBS.

For assistance with benefit or claim inquiries, please contact an Alberta Blue Cross Pharmacy Services Provider Relations contact centre representative at

780-498-8370 (Edmonton and area)

403-294-4041 (Calgary and area)

1-800-361-9632 (toll free)

FAX 780-498-8406 (Edmonton and area)

FAX 1-877-305-9911 (toll free)

Alberta Blue Cross offers online access to current Pharmacy Benefacts and supplemental claiming information to assist with the submission of your direct bill drug claims.

Visit ab.bluecross.ca/providers/pharmacy-home.php

