

Influenza immunization program updates for pharmacy

With the launch of the public influenza immunization program on October 18, 2021, the following updates and reminders are provided to pharmacies.

Age eligibility

As a reminder, pharmacists are enabled under the Scope of Practice to administer vaccines and other injectable drug products to individuals five years of age and older.

For the purposes of **COVID-19 immunization**, this is determined by YEAR OF BIRTH. Individuals must be born in the year 2009 or before.

For the purposes of **Influenza immunization**, this is determined by DATE OF BIRTH as some vaccines are only indicated for specific age groups, which must be met at the time of service.

Fluzone High Dose (HD) for seniors

Only Albertans 65 years of age and older at the time of immunization are eligible for Fluzone HD . All other Albertans should be immunized with standard dose influenza vaccine.

The high-dose vaccine contains four times the antigen available in the standard dose of the influenza vaccine. It is expected that this high-dose vaccine will provide additional protection for seniors, who can be at higher risk for more severe influenza. Because the standard dose influenza vaccine is a safe and effective vaccine alternative—and delaying your influenza vaccination is not recommended—the standard dose vaccine can be offered to individuals 65 years and older if the high dose vaccine is not available. The dose to be administered for Fluzone HD is 0.7mls from the prefilled syringe.

It is important to confirm with the Albertan and be certain they consent to receiving standard dose rather than HD. In addition, once an Albertan 65 years of age or older is immunized with a standard dose influenza vaccine, no further doses of any other influenza vaccine are required or indicated.

There has been over 400,000 doses of Fluzone HD vaccine prepositioned in the province for the influenza immunization program beginning October 18, 2021. The pharmacy wholesale distributors have shipped nearly all the high dose vaccine allocated to them at this time. Data from the vaccine orders shows that combined, pharmacies have ordered more Fluzone HD than the senior population in their area. A reduction in order amounts is a reflection of over ordering.

Please do not refer clients to AHS Public Health for Fluzone HD as they are focusing services for families with children under five years of age and have a minimum supply of the high dose vaccine.

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PHARMACY BENEFACT

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Alberta Vaccine Inventory (AVI) reporting for influenza

As previously stated, the use of the AVI system for reporting your inventory, administration, wastage and on-hand doses of influenza vaccine is a new mandatory requirement for the 2021-2022 season. Please ensure you have reconciled your vaccine inventory in AVI as soon as possible so an accurate count of inventory in the province can be done.

The use of the Alberta Vaccine Booking System (AVBS) remains voluntary for influenza at this time. Use of the AVBS for COVID-19 vaccines is still mandatory.

Co-administration of influenza and COVID-19 vaccine

Advice from public health officials based on the most recent evidence to date supports the safety and efficacy of the co-administration of COVID-19 vaccine and influenza vaccine. This applies to both the standard dose and the high dose versions of influenza vaccine.

Where indicated and appropriate, pharmacists are encouraged to have discussions with their community members about co-administration of these vaccines to prevent the acquisition and transmission of these potentially life-threatening upper respiratory viruses. The integrity and operations of Alberta's acute care system will be directly impacted by the number of cases of COVID-19 and influenza requiring hospitalization. Immunization with these vaccines remains the best defense for our health care system.

Transferring of influenza vaccine between sites

The transfer of provincially funded vaccine between pharmacies is not routinely permitted, exemptions on a case-by-case basis will be considered by Alberta Health.

Email your request to transfer vaccine to health.imm@gov.ab.ca with the subject heading '**Request to Transfer Vaccine**'. The vaccine must be shipped in an appropriate vaccine cooler to maintain two to eight degrees celcius and must have a temperature monitoring device. If approval is granted, a follow-up email is required with the date and time the transfer took place, the temperature of vaccine during transport, the type and amount of vaccine transferred and both pharmacy's information. A form will be provided for recording this information. Alberta Health will assist transferring the vaccine in AVI.

NOTE: This **does not** apply to COVID-19 vaccine as the manufacturer has not approved shipping thawed vaccine more than once. Pharmacies may not transfer vaccine to a physician medical clinic.

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

