

Influenza & COVID-19 Vaccine Campaign 2023-2024: Bulletin #1

The provincial influenza/COVID-19 vaccination campaign is set to start in October. Both vaccines will be available to BC residents in pharmacies and VCH Public Health clinics, the latter focusing on children and rural and inner-city communities. We thank primary care clinicians for participating in the influenza vaccine campaign. You will be notified as soon as vaccine is available for distribution. Please do not book appointments until that time. **New this year is the invitation to primary care offices to participate in the fall COVID-19 vaccination campaign.** If you are interested in offering COVID-19 vaccine to patients in your practices at the same time as their influenza shots, email CDCvaccines@vch.ca for further information.

Influenza activity last season approximated pre-pandemic norms; it arrived several weeks early but also ended early, so it was not a severe season. There has been sporadic influenza A/H1N1 activity reported this summer, including outbreaks in a few Long Term Care Facilities (LTCFs). The influenza vaccination campaign thus remains a critical component of protection against seasonal respiratory illness and we appreciate your support in offering influenza immunization to all your patients.

Eligibility: Influenza vaccine is recommended and **provided free for all BC residents ≥ 6 months of age.** In particular, it should be offered to:

- People at high risk of influenza complications (all children 6-59 months of age, adults 65 years of age and older, pregnant women, children and adults 5-64 years of age with underlying chronic health conditions)
- People capable of transmitting influenza to those at high risk, including household contacts, health care workers, and visitors to health care facilities
- People who provide essential community services
- Anyone else who wishes to reduce their risk of influenza

Publicly funded influenza vaccines available this season:

Product	Fluzone® Quadrivalent	Flulaval® Tetra	Flumist® Quadrivalent ¹	Fluad® Trivalent, Adjuvanted	Fluzone® High-Dose Quadrivalent
Intended use ²	≥ 6 months of age		2-17 years of age	≥ 65 years ³ of age	≥ 65 years ³ of age
Strains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A/Victoria/4897/2022 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus (NEW strain this year) • A/Darwin/9/2021 (H3N2)-like virus • B/Austria/1359417/2021-like virus (B/Victoria lineage) • B/Phuket/3073/2013-like virus (B/Yamagata lineage) – in quadrivalent vaccines only 				

Notes:

¹Flumist® is a live, attenuated vaccine, administered as intranasal spray; additional contraindications apply.

²Do not miss an immunization opportunity: if an intended product is not available, please use an appropriate alternate product.

³ There are two influenza vaccines available for people 65 years and older: Fluad® for community-dwelling seniors, and Fluzone HD® for individuals 65+ who are residents of Long Term Care or Assisted Living facilities or residents of First Nation communities. Individuals 65+ can also be offered Fluzone®.

Reminder: People with severe egg allergy (including anaphylaxis) can be offered any influenza vaccine.

Timing: Influenza vaccine can be given at the same time as, or any interval from, COVID-19 vaccine or other vaccines.

*Children <9 years of age receiving influenza vaccine for the first time should be offered two doses minimum 4 weeks apart.

You can reach a Medical Health Officer at 604.675.3900 | Toll free at 1.855.675.3900
For public health emergencies after hours, contact the Medical Health Officer on call at 604.527.4893

Vancouver Coastal Health Medical Health Officers

Chief Medical Health Officer: Dr. Patricia Daly

Vancouver: Dr. Althea Hayden, Dr. Mark Lysyshyn, Dr. Michael Schwandt, Dr. Ceinwen Pope 604.675.3900

Richmond: Dr. Meena Dawar 604.233.3150 | North Shore: Dr. Alex Choi 604.983.6700 | Coastal Rural: Dr. Moliehi Khaketla 604.984.5070

To receive these updates by email, please contact us at VCHPhysiciansUpdate@vch.ca

September 14, 2023

From the Office of the Chief Medical Health Officer

Vaccine ordering and distribution: We expect to start receiving influenza vaccine by mid to late September and will be offering an **initial supply** to primary care offices soon after. *If your office received influenza vaccine last year, you do not need to place an initial order.* Offices new to the influenza vaccination campaign are invited to call their [local public health unit](#) to register and request vaccine or email CDcvaccines@vch.ca. As several deliveries are expected through to December, clinics will be able to **re-order vaccine**. Multi-group practices are asked to place orders for the entire group.

Reminder about vaccine appointments and booking:

- Primary care clinicians are asked to immunize patients as per your usual clinic procedures. Please offer vaccine proactively at all appointments or at influenza vaccine-specific appointments *booked by your clinic*. Your patients do not need to be booked or registered through the provincial online or phone-based Get Vaccinated appointment booking system to get a vaccine appointment in your office. If you are also providing COVID-19 vaccine, it should be given at the same visit in the opposite arm.
- Individuals 6 months and older can be immunized at VCH Public Health vaccination clinics, and all those 12 years and older at pharmacies. A few pharmacies are immunizing young children starting at 4 years of age. These appointments should be booked through the provincial Get Vaccinated system. Limited walk-in appointments may be available.

Fall 2023 COVID-19 Vaccine Primary Care Pilot

A newly formulated COVID-19 vaccine using the XBB.1.5 strain is planned for use within this fall's vaccination campaign. Moderna XBB.1.5 vaccine has received Health Canada approval for use in ages 6 months and older. Dose varies by age (0.5 mL for 12 years and older; 0.25mL for 6 months-11 years). Product is available in a multi-dose vial containing 2.5 mL of vaccine. Vaccine should be stored at 2 to 8°C for 30 days maximum; punctured vials must be used within 24 hours or discarded. Information on Pfizer XBB.1.5 formulations is pending. Co-administration of influenza and COVID-19 vaccine is recommended.

We are pleased that this fall's COVID-19 vaccine can be ordered by primary care practices, with some requirements for documenting doses given. Offices interested in participating and ordering vaccine are invited to email CDcvaccines@vch.ca for further information.

Health Canada approved RSV vaccine, Arexvy®

We have received a number of questions about Arexvy®, a new RSV vaccine recently approved by Health Canada for individuals 60 years and older. RSV infection poses a significant burden of severe illness for young children and individuals 65 years and older. The vaccine is not publicly funded in BC this year and recommendations by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization are pending. Vaccine is expected to be available in limited amounts for private purchase at the VCH Travel Clinic and some pharmacies.

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