

Physicians' and Nurse Practitioners' Update

September 16, 2024

From the Office of the Chief Medical Health Officer

Influenza & COVID-19 vaccine campaigns 2024-2025 to start in late October

We thank primary care clinicians for participating in the influenza vaccine campaign and also invite you to consider offering the updated COVID-19 vaccine to your patients as well. Influenza vaccine inventory is expected late September and will be ready for distribution to primary care in early October. Please do not book appointments until you are notified of vaccine availability. COVID-19 vaccine is expected to arrive in the coming weeks.

Influenza activity is trending towards pre-pandemic norms and thus the influenza vaccination campaign remains a critical component of protection against seasonal respiratory illness, particularly for children and seniors.

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, people who are pregnant, children and adults 5-64 years of age with underlying chronic health conditions, and Indigenous people 6 months and older), those capable of transmitting influenza to those at high risk (household contacts, health care workers, and visitors to health care facilities), and people who provide essential community services.

Publicly funded influenza vaccines available this season:

Product	Fluzone® Quadrivalent	Flulaval® Tetra	Flumist® Quadrivalent ¹	Afluria® Tetra	Fluad® Trivalent, Adjuvanted ³
Intended use ²	≥ 6 months of age		2-17 years of age	≥ 5 years of age	≥ 65 years of age
Strains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A/Victoria/4897/2022 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus A/Thailand/8/2022 (H3N2)-like virus (NEW strain this year) 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.

³Fluad® is an adjuvanted vaccine, associated with increased vaccine efficacy, and preferentially recommended by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) for individuals 65 years of age and older. If this vaccine is not available, any of the age-appropriate influenza vaccines should be offered.

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.

Vaccine ordering and distribution: *If your office received influenza vaccine last year, you do not need to place an initial order.* Offices new to the influenza vaccination campaign can call their [local public health unit](#) to request vaccine or email cdevaccines@vch.ca. Vaccine deliveries will be coordinated through MTS with the local Divisions of Family Practice in the Lower Mainland. Practices can also pick up vaccine from local health units. Clinics will be able to re-order vaccine. Multi-group practices are asked to place orders for the entire group.

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 | Regional Communicable Disease: Dr. Rohit Vijh

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

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Reminder about booking vaccine appointments: Please immunize patients as per your usual clinic procedures at all appointments or at influenza vaccine-specific appointments *booked by your clinic*.

VCH public health vaccination clinics are primarily immunizing young children; clinics in rural areas with limited pharmacy capacity are also immunizing adults. All individuals 12 years and older can be immunized at pharmacies. Your patients can book an appointment for the community clinics through the provincial Get Vaccinated system.

Fall 2024 COVID-19 Vaccine Offering in Primary Care

A newly formulated COVID-19 vaccine using the KP.2 strain will be available this fall. The new vaccine is recommended for residents of long term care and assisted living facilities, those 65 years and older, patients with underlying health issues, including compromised immune systems, pregnant people, Indigenous people 6 months and older, and health care workers. Other children and adults may also choose to receive the vaccine. Both Moderna and Pfizer formulations are expected. Co-administration of influenza and COVID-19 vaccine, if available, is acceptable. While your patients should receive influenza vaccine as soon as available, they should be advised that COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness begins to wane after 3-4 months and there is unclear seasonality around COVID-19, therefore they may choose to be vaccinated to provide protection for future planned gatherings, travel etc. An interval of 6 months after COVID-19 infection or a previous booster dose is recommended. Please email cdcvaccines@vch.ca to order COVID-19 vaccine for your practice.

Update on new RSV and pneumococcal vaccines

1. RSV monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) and vaccines: RSV infection is responsible for severe illness in young children and individuals 65 years and older. **Infants:** We have received a number of questions about Nirsevimab (Beyfortus), the newest mAb requiring one injection, that is preferentially recommended by NACI for all infants. This product is not yet available in BC through the publicly funded or private purchase route. As a reminder, the BC RSV Immunoprophylaxis program offers publicly funded palivizumab (Synagis) immunoprophylaxis to children at high risk of hospitalization due to RSV, such as premature infants, those with chronic lung or congenital heart disease, or severe immunodeficiency <2 years of age. Monthly palivizumab injections are required throughout the RSV season. Details on the RSV program eligibility and application form are available at the [PHSA's Shared Health Organizations Portal](#). Infants can also be protected via **maternal immunization:** RSVpreF vaccine (Abrysvo[®]), which is approved for use in pregnancy from 32-36 weeks gestation, has an efficacy of 57% in preventing RSV related hospitalizations in infants up to 6 months, and is available for private purchase. **Two RSV vaccines are available for older adults:** Both RSVpreF (Abrysvo[™]) and RSPpreF3 (Arexvy) vaccines are approved for use in adults ≥ 60 years; recommended by NACI for people > 60 years who are residents of long term care or other chronic care facilities, and all adults ≥ 75 years. Both vaccines have high efficacy against reducing RSV-related hospitalizations. They are available for private purchase at select pharmacies and VCH Travel Clinic located in Vancouver (appointments available at travel.clinic@vch.ca or by calling 604-736-9244).

2. New pneumococcal conjugate vaccines requiring private purchase: NACI strongly recommends Pneu-C-20 vaccine for unvaccinated people ≥ 65 years, those 50-64 years at high risk of infection, 18-49 years with immune compromising conditions, children <18 at high risk of invasive disease, and primary immunization of children <5 years. Pneu-C-15 can be used as an alternative for healthy children, and if offered to at-risk adults should be followed by a dose of pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine at a minimum interval of 8 weeks. Adults 65 and older who have previously received pneumococcal immunization can receive Pneu-C-20 five years from their previous pneumococcal dose. Health Canada also recently approved Pneu-C-21; NACI recommendations are pending.

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