

To: Nova Scotia Immunization Providers

From: Dr Ryan Sommers, Senior Medical Director Nova Scotia Health

Date: October 3, 2022

Re: Fall 2022/23 Influenza and COVID-19 Immunization Campaigns

First, we would like to thank all providers for taking the time and effort to organize clinics, promote vaccines, and champion this safe and effective public health intervention. Your efforts will help protect our patients, communities, and health care facilities throughout this respiratory season.

While there was limited influenza activity in Nova Scotia during the 2020-21 season and late influenza activity during the 2021-22 season, we do not anticipate this trend will continue as international epidemiology has revealed an earlier start and rise in influenza cases, particularly in children, in the southern hemisphere this year. As well, other factors such as the easing of public health measures has increased the potential for spread of respiratory viruses, including influenza and COVID-19.

It is important that Nova Scotians remain vigilant regarding both influenza and COVID-19 activity during the 2022-23 influenza season and care providers to remind for patients to be up to date with all their fall immunizations.

The **Fall Respiratory Immunization Campaign** will include:

- The annual influenza immunization program beginning in mid October
- COVID-19 fall doses for those 12 years and older;
- COVID-19 primary series and booster doses authorized for those 5 to 11 years;
- COVID-19 primary series authorized for those 6 months to 4 years

While vaccines will be available for all Nova Scotians, it is most important for individuals at high risk of morbidity and mortality from either respiratory pathogen to receive their COVID-19 and influenza vaccinations. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) also recommends that people who are potentially capable of transmitting influenza to those at high risk should receive annual vaccination.

Those considered at high risk of influenza-related complications or hospitalization include:

- All children 6-59 months of age
- All pregnant people
- Adults and children with specific chronic health conditions
- People of any age who are residents of nursing homes or other chronic care facilities
- Adults 65 years or older, and
- Indigenous peoples\*

*\*There is a higher risk of flu-related complications and/or hospitalization for Indigenous peoples. This is a result of multiple factors, including a high occurrence of chronic health conditions, reduced access to health care, and other social and environmental factors such as poor housing conditions.*

For information on those considered at high risk of COVID-19 related complications refer to: <https://www.nshealth.ca/coronavirustesting> under “Who is considered high risk?”

### **Influenza Vaccine Highlights**

Nova Scotia residents 65 years and older living in long term care facilities (LTCF) including nursing homes, residential care facilities and patients in hospital beds in Nova Scotia designated as *alternate level of care* awaiting LTCF placement will continue to be offered **inactivated high dose quadrivalent vaccine (IIV4-HD)** during the 2022/23 season. Long term care facilities, Pharmacies and Family Physicians identified as responsible for delivering high dose quadrivalent vaccine and hospitals with ALC patients are eligible to order HD influenza vaccine.

**Inactivated quadrivalent standard dose influenza vaccine (IIV4-SD)** will continue to be offered to all other individuals 6 months of age and older. This also includes all staff and those residents of LTCF under 65 years of age.

New this year, pharmacists will be using Clinic Flow to book both influenza and COVID-19 appointments and document receipt of the vaccine. Health care providers not using Clinic Flow continue to administer the influenza vaccine to patients following routine booking and MSI billing processes for this year.

### **Ordering and supply:**

As with all other vaccine ordering, influenza will be ordered early to mid-October through Shopify. The vaccine is received in a series of shipments so you will not receive your entire allotment at once. A vaccine fridge temperature log is required to input the order. Faxed vaccine orders will not be accepted.

In order to ensure that any vaccine is viable, it must be kept at the required temperature. Please review the [Immunization Toolkit](#) for information on transporting and storing vaccines. All vaccine cold chain breaks must be reported to the local public health office by emailing [publichealthvaccineorders@nshealth.ca](mailto:publichealthvaccineorders@nshealth.ca). Vaccines exposed to a cold chain break must be bagged, dated and labelled Do Not Use and kept refrigerated in a monitored and functioning vaccine fridge while waiting to receive direction from Public Health on use of the affected vaccines.

### **Coverage:**

Electronic Medical Records (EMR) are a source of data that provide immunization coverage rates. These records are imported into our vaccine registry in Panorama. For Panorama to accept records from an EMR, the EMR must be configured exactly as per the [EMR-Panorama Vaccine List](#). If a vaccine is not recorded accurately, there is a risk

that the record could be rejected. If you have questions regarding the entry of influenza or other vaccines please contact [panorama@novascotia.ca](mailto:panorama@novascotia.ca)

Though not all health care providers will be providing COVID-19 vaccinations, influenza immunization clinics and appointments present an opportunity to review your patients' vaccination status for COVID-19 and other diseases. Please continue to place priority on those at greatest risk of complications for respiratory disease. We want to thank you for your participation and support in the promotion of the fall respiratory immunization program.

For more information on Influenza vaccines refer to:

[Publicly Funded Seasonal Inactivated Influenza Vaccine Information for Health Care Providers 2022-23](#)

[Canadian Immunization Guide Chapter on Influenza and Statement on Seasonal Influenza Vaccine for 2022–2023 - Canada.ca](#)

[Influenza Immunization 2022-23 and Vaccine Storage and Handling CPD Webinar](#)

### **COVID-19 Vaccine Highlights**

Nova Scotia has accepted the recommendation of NACI and will offer Moderna bivalent COVID-19 vaccine to people aged 18 and older. It is recommended that Nova Scotian's who are eligible for their fall dose receive a dose of bivalent vaccine rather than the original vaccine.

COVID-19 fall dose appointments opened September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Once eligible, most people who have completed their primary series can receive their fall COVID-19 dose 168 days after the last dose they received. However, the following groups can receive their fall dose 120 days after the last dose they received:

- Adults aged 70 and older
- Residents aged 12 and older living in long-term care or senior congregate living settings
- Pregnant persons
- Adults in or from First Nations communities who are 55 years of age or older
- African Nova Scotian adults aged 50 years of age or older
- Individuals aged 12 and older who are moderately to severely [immunocompromised](#)

Those who have had COVID-19 should wait 168 days from their infection before receiving the fall dose. People who are eligible for a shortened interval of 120 days since their last vaccine, who have had COVID-19, should wait 120 days after their infection before receiving the fall dose.

Appointments can be booked online at <https://novascotia.ca/vaccination> or by calling 1-833-797-7772. Vaccine scheduling by phone is available Monday through Friday from 7

a.m. to 7 p.m. and on Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. People who have not completed their primary series can also book the same way. Vaccines are administered at pharmacies.

It is important to note that the COVID-19 fall immunization program continues to evolve. As such, we ask that health care providers continue to monitor and review program updates as they become available.

For more information on COVID-19 vaccines refer to: [Nova Scotia COVID-19 Vaccine Program: Information for Health Care Professionals](#) or the Nova Scotia Government COVID-19 website here: <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/vaccine/>

### **Hybrid immunity:**

Hybrid immunity refers to the immunity acquired through both COVID-19 vaccination *and* COVID-19 infection. Hybrid immunity has been shown to be more robust than immunity due to infection or vaccination alone. Therefore, vaccination remains important for immunity even in instances of prior COVID-19 infection.

### **Coadministration of COVID-19 vaccines with other vaccines:**

Coadministration of COVID-19 and other vaccines, including influenza vaccine is approved for individuals **5 years and older**. As a precaution the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends that for children 6 months to 4 years of age the COVID-19 vaccine should **not** routinely be given at the same time with other vaccines, and instead it is advised to wait 14 days. There may be circumstances in which simultaneous administration, or a shortened interval may be warranted on an individual basis.

Thank you again for helping promote the 2022/2023 Influenza campaign. Finally, please encourage your fellow health care workers and families to get the flu shot this year as well.

Sincerely,



Dr. Ryan Sommers, MD, CCFP FRCPC (PHPM)

Senior Regional Medical Officer of Health and Senior Medical Director Population and Public Health, Nova Scotia Health