

# Special Bulletin

from the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health



**Date:** October 7, 2021

**To:** Nova Scotia Health Care Providers (including 811/911)

**Topic:** Update on Influenza 2021-2022

Even though we are still focused on COVID-19, influenza season is coming soon. Last year we had no influenza in the province of Nova Scotia but are unsure what this year will bring. Yearly immunization against influenza is still an effective measure to protect public health. In addition, providers should encourage individuals to continue with measures such as masking, frequent handwashing, physical distancing, cough/sneeze hygiene and staying home when ill to help reduce transmission respiratory infections like influenza and COVID-19.

#### **Eligibility:**

**Vaccines:** Inactivated quadrivalent standard dose influenza vaccines, **Fluzone® Quadrivalent (Sanofi) and Flulaval® Tetra (GlaxoSmithKline)** will be available for the general population (individuals 6 months and older). A third inactivated quadrivalent standard dose influenza vaccine, **Afluria Tetra (Seqirus)**, is available this year **for use in those aged five years and older**. Immunization providers will order these vaccines from Public Health using **Shopify**.

Nova Scotia residents 65 years and older living in 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 be offered **inactivated high dose quadrivalent influenza vaccine (IIV4-HD)**. The **inactivated quadrivalent standard dose influenza vaccine (IIV4-SD)** will be offered for all other individuals 6 months of age and older including staff and residents of LTCFs under 65 years of age.

#### **Vaccine Orders:**

Beginning early October, the Nova Scotia BioDepot will begin accepting orders for the **influenza vaccines** through the online ordering portal **Shopify**, which launched in August 2021 for ordering COVID-19 vaccines. This shift will mean **faxed vaccine order forms will no longer be accepted for influenza vaccine**. Prior to being able to order vaccine, providers must upload a vaccine fridge temperature log.

The new ordering system for influenza vaccines is an overall improvement to the ordering process for everyone involved, particularly providers. It will facilitate the advancement of inventory management practices, equitable distribution of vaccines and improve vaccine ordering flexibility, transparency, and accuracy.

The Shopify process will address the problems experienced with vaccine supply and ordering mismatch. Although global supply chain issues may still impact the supply of vaccine in the province, communications will be shared with providers if this results in reduced vaccine allocated to practices. It is recommended that providers do not schedule their clinics until their vaccine supply is confirmed through Shopify. Immunization Providers will have to upload a temperature log prior to ordering vaccine.

Providers will need to make appointments to pick up their influenza vaccine due to COVID-19 protocols. Please review the Immunization Toolkit (located at <http://www.cdha.nshealth.ca/immunization-forms>) for information on transporting biologicals to ensure you have all the required equipment when you pick up your vaccine. (e.g. a hard sided cooler which seals properly, ice pack and an insulating layer to ensure the ice does not lay on the vaccine product). Public health can only release vaccine in accordance with this protocol.



**Reporting:**

Providers will be required to provide information to the BioDepot at Nova Scotia Health every two weeks on influenza immunizations, vaccine inventory, vaccine wastage through use of electronic **Smart Sheets/Flu Clinic Report Forms** which will be accessed online through Shopify. Public Health will email information to healthcare providers explaining how to access the electronic **Smart Sheets/Flu Clinic Report Forms**.

**New Immunizations Providers:**

Physician practices and pharmacies that have not previously received vaccine from Public Health will need to contact Public Health to initiate the process to receive publicly funded vaccine. Every new provider must submit a 7-day temperature log for their vaccine fridge with twice a day monitor with a min/max thermometer. They also need to provide contact information to set up their holding point in the electronic vaccine inventory system.

**Electronic Medical Record (EMRs)**

Public Health uses the immunization data from Electronic Medical Records (EMR) so that vaccine records can be accessed to provide timely and up to date information for vaccine inventory management and vaccine coverage surveillance. The quality of an individual's immunization record and public health data analysis rely on many factors including the accurate entry using the Public Health approved vaccine list.

Public Health's digital health solution, Panorama, is configured to only accept EMR immunization records using "**Immunizing Agents**" as the vaccine name. For example: Immunization Providers giving Influenza using the EMR need to select **Influenza-quad** not manufacturer's name or customized names such as 'Afluria Tetra' or 'Flu vaccine 2021'. This includes both High Dose and Standard Dose vaccines.

The following list is used to map public health vaccine names to the EMR: [EMR-Panorama Vaccine List](#). Additional resources are found at the following link: <https://support.novascotia.ca/applications/panorama> If you have questions related to the entry of influenza vaccines (and all vaccines), please email them to the Public Health Information Systems team, Department of Health and Wellness: [panorama@novascotia.ca](mailto:panorama@novascotia.ca).

**Co-administration Influenza Vaccine and COVID-19 vaccine:** The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) has advised that COVID-19 vaccines may be given simultaneously with, or at any time before or after any other inactivated vaccines. Individuals can receive COVID-19 and influenza vaccine (including Flu Mist) at the same time. Pneumococcal vaccine can also be given according to the Nova Scotia Vaccine Schedule at the same time as COVID-19 and Influenza. Based on new NACI recommendations, this year a booster dose of COVID vaccine will be offered along with influenza vaccine for Long Term Care facility residents.

***For further information see:***

Publicly Funded Seasonal Inactivated Influenza Vaccine Information for Health Care Providers 2021-22

<https://novascotia.ca/dhw/cdpc/documents/Publicly-Funded-Seasonal-Inactivated-Influenza-Vaccine-Information.pdf>