

October 2016

To: All North Zone Physicians

Dear Colleague:

Re: Influenza Vaccine Program 2016-2017

With the respiratory infection season nearly upon us, Public Health is once again focused on reducing the incidence and impact of influenza in Alberta. While hand washing and respiratory etiquette play an important role in decreasing the spread of respiratory infections, immunization remains the cornerstone of prevention for influenza.

Alberta Health (AH) will continue to fund a universal influenza vaccine program. All Albertans 6 months of age and older are eligible for provincially-funded influenza vaccine at no charge. Physicians are important partners in protecting the population against influenza in our community, and conserving health care resources. Health care providers should use every opportunity to promote and /or immunize individuals at risk who have not received this vaccine during the current influenza season, even if influenza activity has already commenced in a community.

Alberta Health Services (AHS) requires all Immunizing Partners, including physicians, to complete and sign the 2016-2017 Influenza Vaccine Registration Form in order to receive vaccine. The 2016-2017 Influenza Vaccine Registration Form is available at www.albertahealthservices.ca/2824.asp.

Influenza Vaccines for the 2016-2017 Influenza Immunization Program

Three influenza vaccines will be provided by Alberta Health for the publicly funded universal immunization program: Fluzone®, FluMist® and Flud®.

- There is one trivalent inactivated, adjuvanted influenza vaccines (TIV) - **Flud®** (single dose pre-filled syringe):
 - **Flud®** - licensed for individuals 65 years of age and older. This is the preferred vaccine for individuals 65 years and older, unless contraindicated. If this vaccine is not available **Fluzone®** should be offered.
- There are two quadrivalent influenza vaccines – inactivated **Fluzone®** (multi-dose vial and / or single dose pre-filled syringe) and live attenuated **FluMist®** (single dose pre-filled nasal sprayer):
 - **Fluzone®** - for individuals 6 months of age to 64 years of age and pregnant women.
 - **FluMist®** - for children 2 years to 17 years of age and adults 18 years to 59 years of age on request. Based on a recent review of the most current evidence, Flumist remains as a recommended vaccination option, but is no longer preferentially recommended for children.
 - Physicians may order limited quantities of FluMist® to administer to adults as indicated above.
 - Physicians, who wish to immunize children less than 9 years of age, must request an exemption from their Zone Contact.

Summary of Changes for the 2016-2017 Influenza Immunization Program

- Partners ordering provincially funded vaccines, including influenza and pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccines are required to order vaccine on line via the Alberta Vaccine Inventory (AVI) system. Vaccine inventory must be reconciled prior to any order being submitted or at minimum monthly in the AVI system.
- The Alberta Vaccine Cold Chain (AVCC) Policy March 2015 requires ALL vaccine providers, e.g., AHS Public Health, community physicians, community pharmacists, etc. to meet the conditions of the policy by September 30, 2016. The policy is available at <http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/AIP-Vaccine-Cold-Chain-Policy-2015.pdf>.
 - **Bar** refrigerators are not acceptable for vaccine storage. They are not manufactured to maintain the stable temperature required for vaccine storage. A dedicated refrigerator for vaccine storage is essential.
 - **All staff (current and new)** must have appropriate training for routine and urgent vaccine storage and handling and their responsibility in maintaining Cold Chain.
 - For further information, please refer to the Alberta Health Services Vaccine Storage and Handling Standard found in the Immunization Program Standards Manual available at: <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/10802.asp>.

- A vaccine storage and handling e-learning course has been developed by AHS and can be accessed by:
 - For AHS employees the modules can be accessed through My Learning Link
 - For external providers the modules can be accessed at <http://cdm.absorbrtraining.ca>

REPORTING Requirements for the 2016-2017 Influenza Immunization Program

- Alberta has a provincial immunization repository of all Albertans' immunization records. Effective June 29, 2016 individual immunization records can be viewed in the Alberta Netcare portal. AH and AHS are working with immunizing partners to ensure every influenza vaccine administered is entered into the provincial repository.
- Submit reporting forms accounting for number of influenza doses administered, wasted and on hand to your zone public health contact on a **monthly** basis. Please refer to the "Accountability for Provincially Funded Vaccine" section of this letter for further details.
- **As of October 2017, every dose of influenza vaccine administered must be submitted electronically from the administering site to the provincial repository.** Additional information will be forthcoming regarding this change in reporting requirements.

Update to Eligibility for the 2016-2017 Influenza Immunization Program

- Egg-allergic individuals may be immunized using **any** influenza vaccine (inactivated or live attenuated) without a prior influenza vaccine skin test and with the full dose of vaccine, irrespective of a past severe reaction to egg. Egg-allergic vaccine recipients should be kept under observation for 30 minutes following administration of inactivated influenza vaccine.

Immunization of Children less than 9 Years Old

- As per the Influenza Immunization Policy, children 6 months up to and including 8 years of age will be immunized by AHS Public Health. Physicians requesting an exemption to this requirement must call Teresa Sico at 780-836-7361. Parents/guardians of these children can call Health Link at 811 for public health clinic dates and locations or check the AHS website at <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/Influenza.asp>. The clinic look up tool will be available early October 2015.
- **Dosage for children 6 to 35 months of age:** a full dose (0.5mL) is to be used for all **children 6 to 35 months of age** receiving inactivated influenza vaccine. **Contrary to dosing information in product monographs**, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) does not recommend 0.25 mL doses for children 6 to 35 months of age, based on evidence showing improved antibody response without increase in reactogenicity in children receiving the 0.5 mL dose. Alberta Health endorses NACI's recommendation. Children receiving 0.25 mL doses will be considered inadequately immunized.

Influenza Information Package

Supporting documents to implement a safe and effective influenza immunization program will be available for community providers on the AHS website at www.albertahealthservices.ca/2824.asp. Documents include:

- Alberta Health 2016-2017 Influenza Immunization Policy (IIP)
- 2016-2017 Influenza Vaccine Registration Form
- 2016-2017 Influenza Immunization Orientation PowerPoint Presentation (the previous Influenza Immunization Orientation Workbook has been incorporated into the Orientation PowerPoint Presentation)
- Influenza Immunization Standard
- Influenza Vaccine Information Sheet
- Pneumococcal Vaccine Information Sheet
- Online PDF fillable Influenza and Pneumococcal Immunization Record
- Influenza Immunization Aftercare and Client Immunization Record
- Influenza Reporting Requirements and Coding Explanations Document
- Directions for Use of NCR (Influenza/Pneumococcal Immunization Record)
- Oculorespiratory Syndrome (ORS) Decision Making Algorithm
- AHS Vaccine Storage and Handling e-Learning Course
- Vaccine Storage and Handling Standard
- Vaccine Product Monographs
- NACI Statement on Influenza Vaccine for 2016-2017
- NACI Statement on Influenza Vaccine for 2016-2017 Addendum on LAIV Use in Children and Adolescents <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/naci-ccni/flu-2016-grippe-addendum-children-enfants-eng.php>
- NACI Statement on Influenza Vaccine for 2016-2017 Addendum on LAIV Use in Egg Allergic Individuals- <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/naci-ccni/flu-2016-grippe-addendum-eggs-oeufs-eng.php>

- Additional Supplemental NACI Statements for influenza located at: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/naci-ccni/>
- NACI Statement on Thimerosal
- NACI Statement on Re-immunization with Polysaccharide 23-Valent Pneumococcal Vaccine
- Pneumococcal Polysaccharide Vaccine Biological Page (for community providers authorized to administer provincially-funded pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine)
- Influenza Immunization for Pregnant Women, Breastfeeding Women and Families with Newborns

Please review the above listed documents and print as needed prior to administering influenza vaccine. For those unable to access the AHS website, contact Teresa Sico at 780-836-7361 to obtain these supporting documents.

Eligibility for Provincially-Funded Vaccine

Only those individuals who live, work or go to school in Alberta are eligible to receive provincially-funded vaccine. Out of province/country individuals requesting influenza vaccine must access vaccine through health care providers who have purchased vaccine for this purpose.

Informed Consent for Immunization

To assist you with informed consent, please refer to the 2016-2017 influenza immunization package at www.albertahealthservices.ca/2824.asp for vaccine product monographs and comprehensive information on dosage, contraindications and adverse reactions following immunization with influenza vaccine.

Recording Administration of Vaccine

Influenza/Pneumococcal Immunization Record [No Carbon Record (NCR)] forms are available and a PDF print and fill Influenza/Pneumococcal Immunization Record for an individual record of vaccine administered is also available online at <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/frm-09826.pdf>. A copy can be given to the patient/client. An alternative written or electronic record is acceptable if the required elements outlined in AH Influenza Immunization Policy are documented and the patient /client is provided with a copy of the immunization event.

Accountability for Provincially Funded Vaccine

- AHS must account to AH for all doses of vaccine distributed to immunizing partners and report on vaccine utilization and immunization rates.
- All immunizing partners, therefore, must provide accurate accounting of doses administered using forms provided by their AHS Zone Influenza Immunization contact.
- Doses must be accounted for before additional vaccine will be sent.
- **Report forms accounting for number of influenza doses administered, wasted and on hand will be due to your zone public health contact on a monthly basis.**
 - Zone specific reporting forms are posted on the AHS website at www.albertahealthservices.ca/2824.asp.
 - Community providers will have the option of submitting the reporting form via email or fax to their zone public health contact.
 - Monthly reporting due dates will be indicated on the zone specific report form.
- No charge may be levied for the administration of provincially-funded vaccine provided to you other than the fee schedule amount for an injection.

Adverse Events Following Immunization

- Adverse events temporally associated with influenza vaccine should be reported to AHS Public Health on an Alberta "Report of Adverse Reaction to Immunizing Agents". Report forms can be obtained by calling your local Public Health office
- Severe reactions (e.g., anaphylaxis) should be reported within 24 hours and all other reactions within one week to your local Public Health office.

Health Care Workers (HCWs)

- Transmission of influenza between infected HCWs and their vulnerable patients results in significant morbidity and mortality. Randomized controlled trials conducted in long term care settings have demonstrated that HCW immunization is associated with substantial decreases in morbidity and mortality in the residents. Absenteeism of HCWs ill with influenza may also endanger health care delivery.
- Health care workers, especially those with direct patient contact, should consider it their responsibility to provide the highest standard of care, which includes annual influenza immunization. Not only does immunization protect their patients, it will also protect them and their families.

We strongly encourage you and your staff to be immunized. Anyone training or currently working in health care (including volunteers) should also be immunized.

Community Immunization Opportunities

- Alberta's Influenza Immunization Program begins October 24, 2016.
- In the weeks prior to October 24th, public health offices only may make influenza vaccine available to Albertans considered at high risk of severe complications from influenza. This high risk outreach initiative has been in place in public health for several years.
- AHS Public Health clinic locations and times are available from Health Link or visit <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/Influenza.asp>. The clinic look up tool will be available early October 2016.
- Public health nurses will hold clinics in various community sites including long term/continuing care centres, lodges and assisted living sites.
- Infant and pre-school children will receive influenza vaccine at their routine public health immunization appointments during influenza season.

Ordering and Distribution of Vaccine

- You will be given influenza vaccine based on the doses you administered and accounted for last year.
- When vaccine is available, your order will be at your local Public Health Office.

Cold Chain

- Cold chain must be maintained to ensure potency of vaccine, thereby minimizing the risk of compromising the safety and efficacy of the vaccine. Refer to the Alberta Health Services Vaccine Storage and Handling Standard found in the Immunization Program Standards included in the Influenza Immunization Information Package at www.albertahealthservices.ca/2824.asp.
- Please when picking up your vaccine order, you must bring your weekly temperature log for Public Health to review prior to the release of vaccine.
- In the event vaccine is exposed to temperatures outside of +2°C to +8°C or exposed to light, contact Nicole Reiger at 780-513-7568 and your local Public Health Office.
- Immunizing partners who want to pick up vaccine orders must bring an insulated container, temperature monitoring device and gel / ice packs to transport influenza vaccine back to their offices /sites.

Use of Antivirals

- Use of antiviral medications for prophylaxis and/or treatment is an important adjunct in the management of influenza disease, though immunization remains our primary preventive tool.
- In the past few years, circulating seasonal influenza strains have developed resistance to various antivirals, complicating the provision of recommendations for their use.
- AHS North Zone specific information on prophylaxis in influenza outbreaks in health care or congregate living facilities is available at <http://www.stg.albertahealthservices.ca/medstaff/nzmoh.aspx>.

Your continued participation in the influenza immunization program is greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions or concerns about the influenza vaccine program, please call **Teresa Sico at 780-836-7361** or your local Public Health Centre.

This letter is archived on the AHS MOH website for reference: <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/7082.asp>

Sincerely,

North Zone Medical Officers of Health

Dr. Albert de Villiers, Lead MOH North Zone, Areas 1,2,3,9

Dr. Kathryn Koliaska, MOH North Zone Areas 4,5,6

Dr. Gerhard Benadé, MOH North Zone Area 7,8,10

Dr. Mayank Singal, MOH North Zone Area 7,8,10