

October 2017

Dear Immunizing Partner:

Re: Influenza Vaccine Program 2017-2018

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, respiratory etiquette and staying home from work when ill 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. Albertans 6 months of age and older are eligible for provincially-funded influenza vaccine at no charge. All immunizing partners play an important role 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, to complete and sign the 2017-2018 Influenza Vaccine Registration Form in order to receive vaccine www.albertahealthservices.ca/2824.asp.

Influenza Vaccines for the 2017-2018 Influenza Immunization Program

Two influenza vaccines will be provided by Alberta Health for the publicly funded universal immunization program this season: Fluzone® and Fluad®.

- There is one quadrivalent influenza vaccine – inactivated **Fluzone®** (multi-dose vial and / or single dose prefilled syringe):
 - Fluzone® - for individuals 6 months of age and older and pregnant women.
- There is one trivalent inactivated, adjuvanted influenza vaccine (TIV) - Fluad® (single dose pre-filled syringe):
 - Fluad® - licensed for individuals 65 years of age and older. This vaccine will be used **ONLY** by Alberta Health Services Outreach Program to immunize persons 65 years of age and older living in congregate living facilities. It will not be available to pharmacies or other community health care providers.
- As in previous years, any physician, who wishes to immunize children less than 9 years of age, must request an exemption from their Zone Contact.
- Clients or patients requesting other influenza vaccines should be advised of what is available free of charge, and if they still wish to receive other influenza vaccines, they can see other health care providers who have vaccine for purchase.

Requirements for the 2017-2018 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 new order being submitted or at minimum monthly in the AVI system.
- The Alberta Vaccine Cold Chain (AVCC) Policy April 2017 requires ALL vaccine providers, e.g., AHS Public Health, community physicians, community pharmacists, etc. to meet the conditions of the policy. The policy is available at <http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/AIP-Vaccine-Cold-Chain-Policy-2017.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 an understanding of their responsibility in maintaining Cold Chain.
 - For further information, please refer to the Alberta Health Services Vaccine Storage and Handling Standard available at: www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page14001.aspx
 - A vaccine storage and handling e-learning course has been developed by AHS and is available on AHS MyLearningLink and ABSORB (for those external to AHS) learning management systems.

REPORTING Requirements for the 2017-2018 Influenza Immunization Program

- Alberta has a provincial immunization repository of all Albertans' immunization records. As of June 29, 2016, these individual immunization records became accessible through the Alberta Netcare portal.
- AH and AHS are working towards electronic data capture of individual influenza immunization data into the provincial repository. AHS is currently working with AHS Workplace Health and Safety, Covenant Health Occupational Health Services and Long Term Care Facilities on electronic influenza immunization data capture on a weekly basis for the 2017-2018 influenza immunization program.
- At this time all other partners will continue to submit monthly aggregate data to their AHS Zone Contact. 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.

Update to Eligibility for the 2017-2018 Influenza Immunization Program

- Egg-allergic individuals may be immunized using **any** influenza vaccine 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.
 - 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 2017.
 - Physicians requesting an exemption to immunizing children less than 9 years of age must call our North Zone Contact - Kylie Piffold at 780 830-3503.
- **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, and will require re-immunization.

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 2017-2018 Influenza Immunization Policy (IIP)
 - 2017-2018 Influenza Vaccine Registration Form
 - 2017-2018 Influenza Immunization 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 2017-2018
 - 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, phone our North Zone Contact - Kylie Pilfold at 780 830-3503 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 2017-2018 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

A PDF fillable Influenza/Pneumococcal Immunization Record is available online at <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/frm-09826.pdf> . A copy can be given to the patient/client.

If a paper Influenza/Pneumococcal Immunization Record [No Carbon Record (NCR)] is required, follow up with your AHS Zone Contact.

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 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 all-cause 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 23, 2017.
- In the weeks prior to October 23th, 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 in early October 2017.
- 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.
- Partners ordering provincially-funded vaccines including influenza and pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine will be required to order online using 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.

Cold Chain

- Cold chain must be maintained to ensure potency of vaccine, thereby minimizing the risk of compromising the safety and effectiveness 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.
- In the event vaccine is exposed to temperatures outside of +2°C to +8°C or exposed to light, contact 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.
- AHS information on prophylaxis in influenza outbreaks in health care or congregate living facilities is available at www.albertahealthservices.ca/2824.asp, under the Reference Documents section near the bottom of the webpage.

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 your local Public Health Office.

This memo will be posted 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 & NZ-West Areas 1,2,3,9
Dr. Gerhard Benade, NZ-East Areas 7,8,10

Dr. Kathryn Koliaska, NZ-Central Areas 4,5,6
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