

Influenza Immunization Program 2018-2019 Update

This season, pharmacists are authorized to vaccinate persons 5 years of age and older who have a valid Saskatchewan Health Card with publicly funded influenza vaccine between 22 Oct 2018 and 31 Mar 2019. Children under the age of 9 years requiring a second dose of vaccine can receive immunization until 30 April 2019. An updated screening/consent tool and guideline for influenza injection is available on the [PAS website](#).¹

Notable changes this season:¹

1. Pharmacists may administer and bill for publicly funded influenza vaccine to Saskatchewan residents **age 5 years** and over (previously age 9 and older). Please note that administration in this age group requires additional process and documentation requirements. Details on the PAS website.
2. In addition to pharmacies, pharmacists may administer influenza vaccine in a patient's home and in congregate living settings (defined as a for-profit, not-for-profit or privately owned buildings that may or may not be licensed by the Government of Saskatchewan.) This does **not** include long-term care (LTC) facilities.
3. Fluzone® High-Dose vaccine is publicly funded for LTC residents age 65 years and older.

Three Influenza vaccines are publicly funded by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health for the 2018-2019 season:¹

- Fluzone® Quadrivalent
- Flulaval® Tetra
- Fluzone® High-Dose (for LTC residents over 65 years of age only)

Fluzone® Quadrivalent and **Flulaval® Tetra** are quadrivalent inactivated influenza vaccines containing 15 µg of hemagglutinin (HA) protein for each of the two influenza A and two influenza B strains. This season those strains are: 2

- A/Michigan/45/2015 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus;
- A/Singapore/INFIMH-16-0019/2016 (H3N2)-like virus
- B/Colorado/06/2017-like virus (B/Victoria/2/87 lineage)
- B/Phuket/3073/2013-like virus (B/Yamagata/16/88 lineage)

Fluzone® Quadrivalent and **Flulaval® Tetra** are suitable for use in all individuals over the age of 6 months and are safe for use in all stages of pregnancy.²

Fluzone® High-Dose is a trivalent inactivated influenza vaccine containing 60 µg (HA) protein for each of the first three vaccine strains listed above. It is indicated for use in individuals 65 years and older.² This population is at higher risk of mortality and morbidity from influenza (particularly influenza A) and their immune response to influenza vaccines is lower than that of younger people. The available evidence suggests that the high-dose vaccine should provide superior protection in this population, compared with standard dose influenza vaccine.² This year, **Fluzone® High-Dose is publicly funded for long term care residents 65 years of age and older only**. Pharmacists may administer Fluzone® High-Dose to other people in this age group but would have to order in, pay for and charge for the vaccination. Pharmacies will not receive an administration fee from the Ministry for administering this vaccination.¹

Thimerosal-containing vaccines: all multidose vials of publicly funded influenza vaccine contain thimerosal. Patients preferring thimerosal-free vaccine need to be referred to Public Health where Fluzone® Quadrivalent pre-filled syringes will be available.³ Note that thimerosal is considered safe in pregnancy.⁴

Other influenza vaccines: Pharmacists should still be aware of the other influenza vaccine options. (See Tables 1 and 2 below.) In accordance with the requirements in the Administration of Drugs by Injection and Other Routes - Policies, Standards and Guidelines for Pharmacists, pharmacists may need to inform patients of influenza vaccine options in case of vaccine shortage, patient preference, contraindication, or constituent allergy.⁵ If a non-funded influenza vaccine is requested, pharmacies may purchase and charge the patient for it as a private sale and service.¹

Table 1: Influenza Vaccines Available in Canada^{2,6}

Vaccine Type	Brand Names	Thimerosal-Free?
Quadrivalent Inactivated Influenza Vaccines (QIV)	Flulaval® Tetra	x
	Fluzone® Quadrivalent	√ (PF only)
Trivalent Inactivated Influenza Vaccines (TIV)	Agriflu®	√ (PF only)
	Fluviral®	x
	Influvac®	√
Trivalent Inactivated Influenza Vaccines with Adjuvant (aTIV)	Fluad®	√
	Fluad® Pediatric	√
Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine (LAIV) Quadrivalent	FluMist® Quadrivalent	√
High-Dose Trivalent Inactivated Influenza Vaccine (HD-TIV)	Fluzone® High-Dose	√
PF=pre-filled		

Table 2: Alternatives to Quadrivalent Influenza Vaccine (QIV)^{2,6}

QIV is appropriate and indicated for use in everyone over the age of 6 months.

Patient Age	Vaccine	Rationale	Comments
6-23 months	TIV	If QIV unavailable	QIV preferred as higher prevalence of influenza B in this population
	aTIV	Adjuvanted TIV may confer greater immune response in this population	Available as Fluad® Pediatric
2-17 years	LAIV	Can be used if an IM injection not desirable/appropriate	Available as FluMist® Quadrivalent
	TIV	If QIV unavailable	
18-59 years	LAIV	As above	
	TIV	If QIV unavailable	
60-64 years	TIV	If QIV unavailable	Insufficient evidence to support use of LAIV in this population
≥ 65 years	HD-TIV	Higher prevalence of influenza A in this population. Some evidence of better efficacy in this group	Available as Fluzone® High-Dose
	TIV	If QIV unavailable	
	aTIV	Clinical trials have shown higher immunogenicity and broader cross-reactivity compared to standard TIV. However, it is not yet known how immunogenicity and vaccine effectiveness compare to HD-TIV.	Available as Fluad®

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References:

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2. Canadian Immunization Guide Chapter on Influenza and Statement on Seasonal Influenza Vaccine for 2018-2019. [updated 01 May 2018; accessed 17 Oct 2018] Available at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/canadian-immunization-guide-statement-seasonal-influenza-vaccine-2018-2019.html>
3. Canadian Immunization Guide. Table of updates. [updated 29 Aug 2018; accessed 20 Oct 2018]. Available at <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/canadian-immunization-guide/updates.html?wbdisable=true>
4. Government of Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan influenza immunization policy 2018-2019. [updated Jul 2018; accessed 20 Oct 2018.] Available at: <https://www.ehealthsask.ca/services/resources/Resources/Saskatchewan-Publicly-Funded-Influenza-Immunization-Policy-2018.pdf>
5. Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy Professionals. Administration of Drugs by Injection and Other Routes - Policies, Standards and Guidelines for Pharmacists. [updated Dec 2017; accessed 17 Oct 2018] Available at: https://scp.in1touch.org/document/3614/REF_Injection_Admin_Gdlns
6. Health Canada. Drug Product Database Online Query. Ottawa, ON: Health Canada; [cited 17 Oct 2018]. Available at: <https://health-products.canada.ca/dpd-bdpp/index-eng.jsp>