

Influenza Immunization Program 2019-2020 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 21 Oct 2019 and 31 Mar 2020. Children under the age of 9 years requiring a second dose of vaccine can receive immunization until 30 April 2020. An updated screening/consent tool and guideline for influenza injection is available on the [PAS website](#).¹

Notable changes this season²:

- **Afluria® Tetra** is a new split virus quadrivalent inactivated influenza vaccine. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends that it may be considered among the quadrivalent inactivated influenza vaccines offered to adults and children five years of age and older. It is not funded for use in Saskatchewan this influenza season.
- **FluMist® nasal spray** is not available for this season due to shortage of an active ingredient³ and therefore has not been included in this update.
- **New NACI abbreviations for influenza vaccines.** Due to addition of new formulations of influenza vaccines, NACI has updated its abbreviations to better differentiate between vaccines. Details available in Table 1.

Vaccines funded by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health for the 2019-20 Seasonal Influenza Program¹:

- Fluzone® Quadrivalent
- Flulaval® Tetra
- Fluzone® High-Dose for long-term care (LTC) facility residents 65 years and older.

Fluzone® Quadrivalent and **Flulaval® Tetra** are quadrivalent inactivated influenza vaccines containing 15 mcg of hemagglutinin (HA) protein for each of the two influenza A and two influenza B strains.¹

- A/Brisbane/02/2018 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus; (new for 2019-2020)
- A/Kansas/14/2017 (H3N2)-like virus (new for 2019-2020)
- 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 mcg (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. However, evidence is not sufficient for NACI to make a preferential recommendation for adults 65 and older;

Fluzone® High-Dose is publicly funded for long term care residents 65 years of age and older only.² 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.¹ Note that thimerosal is considered safe in pregnancy.²

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.⁴ 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^{2,5}

Vaccine Type	Brand Names	Thimerosal-Free?
Quadrivalent Standard-Dose Inactivated Influenza vaccine (IIV4-SD – formerly QIV)	Fluzone® Quadrivalent*	Yes (PFS only)
	Flulaval® Tetra*	Yes (PFS only)
	Influvac® Tetra	Yes
	Afluria® Tetra	Yes (PFS only)
Trivalent Standard-Dose Inactivated Influenza Vaccine (IIV3-SD – formerly TIV)	Agriflu®	Yes (PFS only)
	Fluviral®	No
High-Dose Trivalent Inactivated influenza Vaccine (IIV3-HD – formerly High Dose TIV)	Fluzone® High-Dose^	Yes
Adjuvanted Inactivated Influenza Vaccine (IIV3-Adj - formerly ATIV or adjTIV)	Fluad Pediatric®	No
	Fluad®	No
PFS=pre-filled syringe		
*Publicly funded in SK for the 2019-20 influenza season		
^Publicly funded in SK for the 2019-20 influenza season for residents of LTC facilities who are 65 years and older		

Table 2: Alternatives to Quadrivalent Influenza Vaccine (IIV4-SD)^{2,5}

Please note that Fluzone® Quadrivalent and Flulaval® Tetra are appropriate and indicated for use in everyone over the age of 6 months.

Influvac® Tetra is indicated for use over the age of 18 years and Afluria® is indicated for ages 5 years and older.

Age	Vaccine	Rationale	Comments
6-23 months	IIV3-Adj	Adjuvanted TIV may confer greater immune response in this population.	Available as Fluad® Pediatric.
	IIV3-SD	Only if IIV4-SD unavailable.	Higher prevalence of influenza B in this population.
2-64 years	IIV3-SD	Only if IIV4-SD unavailable.	
65+ years	IIV3-HD	IIV3-HD is preferred over IIV3-SD given the increased burden of influenza A and evidence of better efficacy in this age group.	Available as Fluzone® High-Dose. May cause more injection-site reactions.
	IIV3-SD	At this time, there is insufficient evidence to preferentially recommend one of these preparations over the other.	
	IIV3-Adj		Available as Fluad®. May cause more injection-site reactions.

FAQ:

Q: *Can the seasonal influenza vaccine be given with other vaccines?*

A: Any of this year's publicly funded influenza vaccines may be given concomitantly with, or at any time before or after, live attenuated vaccines or other inactivated vaccines.^{2,6} Theoretically, there may be more side effects if two adjuvanted vaccines are given together, for example, Fluvad® with Shingrix®.⁷

Q: *What if someone got a larger than recommended dose or more than one influenza vaccine this season?*

A: Administration of larger than recommended vaccine dosages are considered valid, but may cause greater local or systemic reactions.⁶

Q: *What is the evidence re: use of the High-Dose influenza vaccine in adults < 65 years of age?*

A: At this time, there is no evidence available on use in this population. Keep in mind that Fluzone® High-Dose is only trivalent. The regular Fluzone® is quadrivalent and provides broader protection from influenza B which is more prevalent in this age group.²

Q: *Could 4 doses of Fluzone® be given instead of 1 dose of Fluzone® High-Dose to save the patient money?*

A: No. The main reason is that Fluzone® High-Dose is trivalent whereas Fluzone® is quadrivalent. This substitution is not recommended.⁸

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References:

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