

VCH Influenza Campaign 2022-2023 For Public Health and Mass clinic Immunizers: Frequently Asked Questions from the Public

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18. **What if our clinic setting cannot maintain the proper infection prevention and control measures (eg. physical distancing) in waiting areas for the post-vaccination 15 minute observation period given the volume of individuals seeking immunization?**

1. What is in the influenza vaccine this year?

- A/Victoria/2570/2019 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus
- A/Darwin/9/2021 (H3N2)-like virus **NEW for 2022/23**
- B/Austria/1359417/2021-like virus **NEW for 2022/23**
- B/Phuket/3073/2013-like virus (in quadrivalent vaccines only)

2. What products are available for the 2022-2023 influenza season?

Most products for 2022/2023 will be Quadrivalent formulation with the exception of Flud[®] which is a trivalent vaccine.

Products:

- Fluzone[®] **QIIV** (Multi dose and Pre-filled syringes)
- Flumist[®] **QIIV** (LAIV nasal spray)
- Fluzone[®] **QIIV** High-Dose (HD): only for 65+ residents of long term care facilities, assisted living facilities, and 65+ First Nations communities
- Flud[®] **TIIV** (community dwelling seniors 65+)

3. When will the flu shot be available?

B.C. begins distribution as soon as vaccine is available, which is usually in early October. Immunization priority is given to the most vulnerable, including residents of long-term care and health-care workers. COVID-19 community clinics will be offering mass flu clinics this year.

4. How do I book an appointment to get immunized against flu?

Residents of BC will be asked to register via the provincial system in order to be invited to book an appointment. <https://www.getvaccinated.gov.bc.ca/s/>

5. Where else can I get a flu vaccine?

- At a VCH COVID-19 mass clinic*
- With your family physician
- At a walk-in clinic
- At a pharmacist**
- At a travel clinic including VCH Travel Clinic

*For flu vaccine at COVID-19 mass clinics visit: <http://www.vch.ca/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine>

**For clinics at pharmacies and public health, go to <https://immunizebc.ca/clinics/flu#8/49.246/-123.116>

6. Can I receive flu vaccine at the same visit as my COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. VCH recommends COVID-19 vaccine can be administered at the same as flu vaccine.

7. If I get the flu vaccine every year, will it continue to protect me?

Yes. Many studies have shown that people who receive the flu shot are better protected against seasonal influenza than those who are not vaccinated. There are a few studies that have detected reduced amount of protection among those who are immunized annually against influenza. The reasons for this effect are not understood. However, the same studies show that vaccinated people are always better off than unvaccinated people regardless of prior history of immunization. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) has reviewed these studies and continues to recommend that people get their annual influenza vaccine.

8. Can FluMist® be given at the same time as other live vaccines?

Yes. **FluMist®** can be given concomitantly with, or any time before or after any other live vaccine.

9. Should I be concerned about the effectiveness of FluMist®?

No. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) concluded that the current evidence is consistent with Live-Attenuated Influenza Vaccine (LAIV) providing comparable protection against influenza to that shown by the injectable Influenza vaccine. This conclusion comes after careful review of the available Canadian and international LAIV vaccine efficacy data over many influenza seasons.

For more information please see NACI Statement on Seasonal Influenza vaccine 2022/2023 at [Canadian Immunization Guide Chapter on Influenza and Statement on Seasonal Influenza Vaccine for 2022–2023 - Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/immunization/immunization-guide/immunization-guide-chapter-on-influenza-and-statement-on-seasonal-influenza-vaccine-for-2022-2023.html)

10. If my child is currently on an antiviral against influenza (eg. Oseltamivir), can FluMist® also be given at the same time?

No. Since antivirals against influenza interfere with the immune response to FluMist®, FluMist® should not be given to individuals while on these antivirals. Such individuals should receive the inactivated influenza vaccine.

11. Is Fluzone® HD (High Dose) publicly funded for seniors for the 2022-2023 season?

Yes. Fluzone® HD was purchased by the province and will be publicly funded for those 65 years and older living in long-term care facilities, assisted living facilities, and seniors 65 years and older in First Nations communities. Fluzone® HD is recommended by NACI, and is expected to provide superior protection compared to standard-dose. For those community dwelling seniors who do not qualify for publicly-funded Fluzone® HD, they should be offered Flud® or FluZone® Quad.

Alternatively, Fluzone® HD may be available for purchase at your local pharmacy or travel clinic, including VCH Travel Clinic. Call ahead to see if available.

12. What is the difference between Fluzone® Quadrivalent and Fluzone® High-Dose (HD) vaccines?

Fluzone® Quadrivalent is a flu vaccine indicated for the general public aged 6 months and over to protect against four strains of the flu; two A strains and two B strains.

Fluzone® HD is an inactivated influenza vaccine that contains four times the amount of antigen compared to regular flu vaccines. The additional antigen amount is intended to create a stronger immune response in the person getting the vaccine. In Canada, this vaccine is approved for adults 65 years of age and older.

For more information on Fluzone® HD, please see the BCCDC Q&A (updated August 2022):

<http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Guidelines%20and%20Forms/Guidelines%20and%20Manuals/Immunization/Vaccine%20Info/Influenza-vaccines-adults-65-older-QandA.pdf>

13. Can seniors get the ‘double’ dose of Fluzone® Quadrivalent?

No. Double dosing influenza vaccine for seniors is not recommended. There are a number of differences between Fluzone® Quadrivalent and Fluzone® HD.

14. Can a client receive Fluzone® HD after they received QIIV?

No. Only one dose of influenza vaccine is recommended for adults. Thus, if client has already received QIIV, Fluzone® HD is not needed in the same season.

15. At a mass flu clinic, if a preferred product by age is not available, what would be the recommendation?

Regardless of the vaccine product chosen, any individual six months of age and older is recommended to get the flu shot. Only one dose is needed. Given that they made the appointment and took the time to come, we recommend they be immunized using the flu products available so an immunization opportunity is not lost. They can then take the time to consider additional information and have a plan in place for subsequent seasons.

16. Is there a non-egg based, non-animal matter influenza vaccine option for Vegan individuals?

Vegan vaccines (non-egg based, non-animal matter) against influenza are not available in Canada.

17. Is Flu vaccine recommended at any stage of pregnancy?

Yes. The inclusion of all pregnant women, at any stage of pregnancy, is particularly recommended due to the risk of influenza-associated morbidity in pregnant women. The risk of influenza-related hospitalization increases with length of gestation (i.e., it is higher in the third trimester than in the second).

18. What if our clinic setting cannot maintain the proper infection prevention and control measures (eg. physical distancing) in waiting areas for the post-vaccination 15 minute observation period given the volume of individuals seeking immunization?

It is highly recommended that influenza vaccination clinics implement appropriate COVID safety precautions including physical distancing and other infection prevention and control measures. NACI recommends that a 15-minute post-vaccination observation period should be maintained even during the COVID-19 pandemic (Strong NACI recommendation).

NACI recommends that a shorter* post-vaccination observation period, between 5 to 15 minutes after influenza immunization, may be considered during the COVID-19 pandemic when appropriate physical distancing in post-vaccination waiting areas cannot be maintained due to the volume of individuals seeking immunization (Discretionary NACI recommendation).

***A shorter observation period may be considered only if the vaccine recipient meets the following conditions:**

- Past history of receipt of influenza vaccine and no known history of severe allergic reactions (including anaphylaxis)
- No history of other immediate post-vaccination reactions (eg. syncope with or without seizure) after receipt of any vaccines
- The vaccine recipient is accompanied by a parent/guardian (in the case of a child) or responsible adult who will act as a chaperone to monitor the vaccine recipient for a minimum of 15 minutes
- The vaccine recipient will not be operating a motorized vehicle, self-propelled or motorized wheeled transport (eg. bicycle, scooter) for a minimum of 15 minutes after vaccination (can wait in parking lot for the total 15 minutes)
- The vaccine recipient/responsible adult knows when and how to seek post-vaccination advice and medical service if required
- The vaccine recipient and parent/guardian/adult responsible agree to remain in the waiting area for the reduced observation period