
Memorandum

To: Nova Scotia Immunization Providers
From: Dr. Frank Atherton, Deputy Chief Medical Officer of Health
Date: September 11, 2014
Re: **INFLUENZA VACCINATION PROGRAM FOR 2014-2015**

The annual influenza immunization season is fast approaching. Your participation and support in the promotion of the annual influenza program is greatly appreciated.

Eligibility/Susceptibility

For the 2014/15 season, influenza vaccine is recommended and publicly funded for all Nova Scotians. While all Nova Scotians are encouraged to be immunized, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) emphasizes that high risk individuals or those people capable of transmitting influenza to those at high risk remain the top priority for influenza immunization. Influenza vaccination is available to all residents of Nova Scotia ages 6 months or older but we know that it is particularly important for the elderly, children, and people living with chronic diseases, and those around them to be adequately protected.

Pregnant women who contract influenza are at increased risk for hospitalization, death and for premature labour and delivery. Infants born during influenza season, to vaccinated women, are less likely to be premature, small for gestational age, or suffer from low birth weight. Other benefits to the newborn are increased protection against influenza and influenza-related hospitalization in the first six months of life during which vaccine is not licensed.

Trivalent Inactivated Vaccine (TIV) in pregnancy is both safe and effective and it is the best way to protect the health of themselves, their unborn baby and their newborn.

Health Care Providers

In both our clinical practice, and as leaders in health care facilities and District Health Authorities, there are many opportunities for health care providers to promote and support annual influenza immunization, such as:

- ensuring that individuals (especially those at high risk) are advised about and offered influenza vaccine at every clinical encounter during the fall and early winter

- encouraging and supporting initiatives to provide influenza vaccine within health care facilities, such as at outpatient specialty clinics (e.g. diabetic daycare), as part of discharge planning for admitted patients and in emergency departments
- being a positive role model for other health care workers (HCW) by being immunized yourselves, encouraging co-workers to be immunized, providing factual information on influenza vaccine and ensuring HCW and patients are offered vaccine
- promoting and supporting the allocation of resources to implement comprehensive influenza immunization programs for both the public and HCW
- working with other partners to increase opportunities for the public to access influenza immunization

Vaccine Supply/Ordering

Public Health receives several shipments of vaccine over a period of time and must ensure it is distributed equitably across the province to a range of immunization providers. As a result, it is not possible to fill vaccine order requests from immunization providers for their whole seasons' supply. Please place your first vaccine order based on the amount of vaccine you expect to use within the next month and then gauge subsequent orders on your sense of ongoing demand. Public Health will attempt to fill each individual vaccine order but there may be a need to limit the amount of vaccine given to a single provider to ensure reasonable access for all Nova Scotians and for all providers. We ask you to plan your immunization clinics accordingly and we encourage you to first immunize people at greatest risk of influenza-related complications.

Vaccine orders can be placed anytime. It is important to work with your local Public Health office to coordinate vaccine ordering and delivery. Although you may have vaccine, immunization providers are being asked to wait until the week of October 19, 2014 to provide immunizations.

Billing

Billing information is used to collect data on physician and pharmacist delivered vaccine as part of assessing overall influenza vaccine coverage rates. MSI and Pharmacy billing information is available in the Seasonal Influenza Questions and Answers found at: <http://novascotia.ca/dhw/cdpc/documents/2014-2015-Q-A-Seasonal-Influenza-Vaccine-Information.pdf>

All other immunization providers are requested to complete aggregate report forms available from your local Public Health Office.

Thank you for your continued support in promoting influenza vaccination.