

Public Health Link

From the Chief Medical Officer for Wales

Distribution: As Appendix 1

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Category: Immediate (cascade within 24 hours)

Title: **Influenza Immunisation Programme 2021-22 – Update on Ordering Influenza Vaccines.**

What is this about: This letter provides further advice to general practices, community pharmacies, health boards and trusts on ordering influenza vaccines for the 2021-22 influenza season.

As a result of interventions put in place to protect against COVID-19 (such as mask-wearing, physical and social distancing, and restricted international travel) influenza activity levels were extremely low globally in 2020-21. This winter we need to be prepared for higher levels of influenza activity and the possibility that it could be a more severe influenza year, with more of the population susceptible to influenza given the low levels last season. Influenza vaccination uptake in Wales was the highest ever last year and achieving a high uptake will be an important priority this coming autumn to reduce morbidity and mortality associated with influenza, and to reduce hospitalisations during a time when the NHS and social care may also be managing winter outbreaks of COVID-19.

Priority cohorts

In [WHC \(2021-004\)](#), the Chief Medical Officer provided guidance on ordering supplies of influenza vaccines for the 2021-2022 season based on advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). The JCVI advice can be found at: [JCVI](#) or [NHS Wales Intranet](#) (NHS Wales staff only). In addition to the priority groups identified in [WHC \(2021-004\)](#), people aged **50 to 64 years** will again be eligible for NHS influenza vaccination, as hospitalisation from COVID-19 increases from the age of 50 years onwards. Individuals in this age group can be offered influenza vaccination from the start of the vaccination period and need not wait until later in the season. Working together in primary care will be important. Community pharmacies are expected to play a strong role in vaccinating the 50 to 64 year old cohort which will help to ensure the availability of general practice capacity to continue to focus on influenza and COVID vaccination of the most vulnerable clinical cohorts.

Vaccines reimbursed as part of the NHS immunisation programme 2021-22

In addition to the information contained in [WHC \(2021-004\)](#), the following provides updated advice on recommended vaccines for 2021-22 which will be eligible for reimbursement.

Those aged 65 years and over	Those aged 50 to 64 years	At-risk adults, including pregnant women, aged 18 to less than 65 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aQIV • QIVc/QIVr (where aQIV is not available) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QIVc/QIVr • QIVe (where QIVc or QIVr is not available) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QIVc/QIVr • QIVe (where QIVc or QIVr is not available)

Key:

aQIV - adjuvanted quadrivalent influenza vaccine

QIVc - quadrivalent cell culture influenza vaccine

QIVr - quadrivalent recombinant influenza vaccine

QIVe - quadrivalent influenza egg-culture vaccine

In [WHC \(2021-004\)](#), quadrivalent recombinant influenza vaccine (QIVr) was not indicated as eligible for reimbursement in 2021-22. Doses of QIVr are now available to order in limited quantities in the UK and this vaccine will now be eligible for reimbursement. Providers should liaise with the manufacturer, Sanofi, to discuss orders. The JCVI considers the use of QIVr to be effective in both those aged over 65 years and those aged 18 to 64 years.

The JCVI also considered the use of High-Dose quadrivalent influenza vaccine (QIV-HD) in those aged 65 and over. However QIV-HD is **not** currently available in the UK market.

For the children's programme, the guidance remains unchanged from [WHC \(2021-004\)](#). Live attenuated quadrivalent influenza vaccine (LAIV) is the recommended vaccine for use in all eligible children aged 2-17 years of age unless contraindicated or declined due to gelatine content. LAIV is supplied centrally. Where an injectable vaccine is offered as an alternative to LAIV in the circumstances described, it will be eligible for reimbursement. Children under 2 years of age are recommended quadrivalent influenza egg-culture vaccine (QIVe). A small central supply of QIVe will be available to support vaccination in this group. Further information on accessing this will be provided nearer the start of the season.

Manufacturers will start to produce volumes of vaccines shortly based on the orders they have received. Please submit your order as soon as possible.

The following information may be helpful in accessing additional supplies:

Manufacturer	Notes
Mylan	Mylan have some doses of QIVe available that can be used for this cohort. Please contact their flu customer services team who will be able to help you place your order on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freephone: 0800 358 7468 • E-mail: flu@mylan.com
Seqirus	In the first instance Seqirus will contact existing customers who already have a QIVc order to facilitate any amends.

Sanofi Pasteur	Sanofi Pasteur will be fulfilling current orders for the 2021-2022 season with QIVe or QIVr (Supemtek), you can contact Sanofi Pasteur with any questions around current or future orders through your local representative: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vaxishop • Tel: 0800 854 430 (option 1)
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General practices, community pharmacies and health boards/trusts should review influenza vaccine orders in light of this update to at least attain levels of uptake equivalent to those achieved in 2020-21 as indicated below.

Influenza vaccination uptake 2020-21 (at March 2020) and ambitions for 2021-22

Eligible groups	2020-21	2021-22
Aged 65 years and over	76%	At least 75%
Under 65 clinical at-risk group	51%	At least 75%
Pregnant women	-	At least 75%
Aged 50 to 64 years	37%	N/A
Health care workers with direct patient contact	65%	100% offer
Care home workers	-	100% offer
Domiciliary care workers	-	100% offer
Children aged two and three years	56%	N/A

There may be further policy developments to ensure maximum uptake across all eligible cohorts during 2021-22. These developments will be informed by the levels and impact of COVID-19 in communities. Further advice will be communicated as soon as possible in the Chief Medical Officer’s annual influenza programme letter to be issued in the next few weeks.

Thank you for your continued support to increase influenza vaccination uptake and protect more people from this potentially serious vaccine preventable disease.

Appendix A

To: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership to forward to:

All General Practitioners - please ensure this message is seen by all practice nurses and non-principals working in your practice and retain a copy in your 'locum information pack'.

All Community Pharmacies
Deputising Services

To: Health Boards and NHS Trusts:

Chief Executives
Medical Directors
Nurse Directors
Directors of Public Health
Chief Pharmacists
Directors of Primary, Community and Mental Health
Immunisation Coordinators

To: Public Health Wales:
Chief Executive
Director of Public Health Services
Consultants in Communicable Disease Control
Head Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme

Cc: GPC (Wales)
RCGP (Wales)
Community Pharmacy Wales
Royal Pharmaceutical Society Wales