

August 10, 2023

Re: Manitoba's Influenza & COVID-19 Immunization Program

Dear Health Care Provider,

As previously communicated, the Seasonal Influenza and COVID-19 Immunization Programs are transitioning into a single program. The ordering and distribution model has been revised to reflect that merge and further communications and instructions will follow shortly.

Please find below a summary of the changes regarding the *2023-24 Manitoba's Influenza & COVID-19 Immunization Program*:

Products

- Flu and pneumococcal vaccine products have not changed since last year.
- Pfizer, Moderna and Novavax are the anticipated manufacturers that will have products with updated formulations available. These new formulations and their age indications are still pending Health Canada approval.
- Moderna and Pfizer's products are expected to have limited stability once in the fridge. The provincial warehouse will be shipping the product with the influenza doses in refrigerated temperatures. Once received:
 - o Moderna is only good in the fridge for 30 days (unopened)
 - o Pfizer is only good for 12 weeks in the fridge (unopened)
 - o More details will be made available and shared on product specifications once approved by Health Canada
- At this time, it is unknown when jurisdictions will receive their allotments of COVID-19 vaccines as approval from Health Canada is pending. It is anticipated that product will be available for shipping with the influenza vaccines in late September.
- Novavax is the only non-mRNA COVID-19 vaccine that will be available this fall.
- Note: Manitoba Health is not implementing a publicly-funded RSV vaccine program for older adults this year.

Eligibility

- There have not been any changes to the flu and pneumococcal eligibility criteria:
 - o Flu vaccines: people aged 6 months and older are eligible to receive their seasonal flu vaccine. The high-dose flu vaccine remains the preferred product for people aged 65 years and older (www.manitoba.ca/health/flu/index.html).
 - o Pneumococcal vaccine: Individuals aged 65 years and older are eligible for one lifetime booster dose of PNEU-P-23. Individuals less than 65 years of age who are at high risk of invasive pneumococcal disease (IPD) may be eligible based on Manitoba's vaccine eligibility criteria (<https://www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/vaccineeligibility.html>).
- Beginning in the fall of 2023 for those previously vaccinated against COVID-19, NACI recommends a dose of the new formulation of COVID-19 vaccine for individuals in the authorized age group if it has been at least 6 months from the previous COVID-19 vaccine dose or known SARS-CoV-2 infection (whichever is later).

Immunization is particularly important for those at increased risk of COVID-19 infection or severe disease, for example:

- o Adults 65 years of age or older
- o Residents of long-term care homes and other congregate living settings
- o Individuals with underlying medical conditions (<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/guidance-documents/signs-symptoms-severity.html#a3>) that place them at higher risk of severe COVID-19
- o Individuals who are pregnant

- Individuals in or from First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities*
- Members of racialized and other equity-deserving communities
- People who provide essential community services

Manitoba's COVID-19 vaccine eligibility criteria for the fall will be revised once information about which age groups are authorized to receive the new XBB formulation is released by Health Canada and will be promptly posted at <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/vaccine.html>.

- It is recommended that there be 6-month interval from the previous COVID-19 vaccine dose or known SARS-CoV-2 infection (whichever is later) when administering the updated formulation of the COVID-19 vaccines. Please consider this if offering a booster dose to a client, and discuss this as part of informed consent.

Registration

- Registration for Manitoba's Influenza & COVID-19 Immunization Program opened on July 13, 2023.
- Every location that plans to participate in Manitoba's Influenza and COVID-19 Immunization Program must register in order to participate in the program, including those who registered for the previous seasons.
- While providers can register at any time during the season, it is strongly recommended that you complete your registration by submitting this online form <https://forms.office.com/r/dTEvd2ZMYy> **by August 15, 2023**, to ensure that you will be included in the communications list and distribution group prior to the beginning of the season.

Orders and Clinics

- It is anticipated that online ordering surveys will go out every two weeks (the exact timing of the first order survey is still to be determined) and will be based on two distribution groups.
- Personal Care Homes, Hospitals, and First Nations Communities will be included within the first distribution group. Those locations are encouraged to start immunizing as soon as providers get flu vaccines.
- Personal Care Homes should strive to complete the influenza immunizations for all eligible residents by **October 31, 2023**. COVID-19 vaccine administration is expected to be based on time since last infection or dose.
- Public health offices should schedule their clinics starting the **week of October 23, 2023** to ensure adequate time for vaccines to be delivered.
- The co-administration of COVID-19 vaccine with the flu and/or pneumococcal vaccine is encouraged to minimize missed opportunities for vaccination, provided that clients are eligible for these vaccines.

Online and print resources

- Both the seasonal flu (www.manitoba.ca/health/flu/index.html) and COVID-19 (www.manitoba.ca/covid19/index.html) websites and their resources are being updated.
- Manitoba's Influenza & COVID-19 Immunization Program Plan is being reviewed and will be posted shortly. A communication will be sent once available.
- Print resources including influenza factsheets, posters, etc will be available for ordering as soon as possible.
- Manitoba Health will release a single consent form for influenza, pneumococcal, and COVID-19 vaccines shortly.

If you have any questions, please contact the Communicable Disease Control Unit at 204-788-6737 or by email at vaccines@gov.mb.ca.

Looking forward to working collaboratively with you in the upcoming 2023/24 respiratory virus season.

Thank you,

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