

# WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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**Title:** Ordering flu vaccine for the 2018-19 season

**Date of Expiry / Review** N/A

**For Action by:**

General Practitioners  
Chief Executives, Health Boards/Trusts  
Pharmacists

**For information to:**

Medical Directors, Health Boards/Trusts  
Nurse Executive Directors, Health Boards/Trusts  
Directors of Public Health, Health Boards/Trusts  
Immunisation Leads, Health Boards  
Immunisation Coordinators, Health Boards  
Executive Director of Public Health, Public Health  
Wales  
Head VPD Programme, Public Health Wales  
Royal College of GPs  
Royal College of Nursing  
Royal College of Midwives  
British Dental Association  
Royal Pharmaceutical Society  
Community Pharmacy Wales  
British Medical Association, Wales  
General Practitioner Council, Wales

**Sender:**

Chief Medical Officer for Wales

**DHSS Welsh Government Contact(s) :**

Health Protection Services, Department for Public Health, Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff.  
CF10 3NQ Email: HealthProtection@gov.wales

**Enclosure(s):** None

Dear Colleague,

Many of you will already be planning for the 2018-19 influenza vaccination campaign and in the process of ordering influenza vaccine.

This letter provides advice on ordering supplies of influenza vaccine for the 2018-19 season, supported by advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).

To ensure that as many people as possible in eligible groups can be offered vaccination, it is crucial that a sufficient stock of vaccine is secured to enable maximum uptake, whilst minimising unnecessary wastage. It is also important to provide the vaccine that offers the best protection for the various at risk groups.

Updated advice from the JCVI on the cost effectiveness of particular vaccines indicates:

- Quadrivalent vaccine is cost effective in those aged 6 months to 64 years in clinical risk groups.
- The adjuvanted trivalent vaccine is cost effective when administered to those aged 65 to 74 years.
- The adjuvanted trivalent vaccine is the only clinically effective and cost effective option for those aged over 75 years.

Further detail on the JCVI's advice can be found on pages 3 and 4.

### **Ordering Injectable Influenza Vaccine**

Each General Practice should aim to increase influenza vaccine uptake each year and order sufficient vaccine to protect:

- at least 75% of their patients aged 65 years and older.
- at least 55% of those under 65 years who are in an at risk group.
- all pregnant women.
- the very small number of children aged six months to under two years old who are in an at risk group.
- the small number of children aged two to 17 years in an at risk group but contraindicated live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV).
- the small number of primary school aged children contraindicated LAIV.
- those in other eligible groups.

The eligible groups notified for the 2017-18 season are expected to remain unchanged. Any further changes will be notified as soon as possible.

It is projected that there will be approximately 2.5% more people in Wales aged 65 years and older next season, equivalent to an overall increase of around 1.5% in the eligible groups. This is the amount of additional vaccine that needs to be ordered simply to maintain the same uptake as this year and should be taken into consideration when ordering vaccine.

It is recommended that orders for injectable flu vaccine are placed with more than one supplier, where possible, to help reduce the risk of vaccine shortages due to batch failures or delays in deliveries from a single supplier.

### **Quadrivalent Vaccines**

**For children**, quadrivalent vaccines should be used in preference to trivalent vaccines because of the additional protection offered, as recommended in “Immunisation against infectious disease” (the “Green Book”).

**For adults**, updated guidance on the cost effectiveness of trivalent and quadrivalent inactivated injectable influenza vaccines has been published in “the “Green Book”. You will wish to consider this when choosing which influenza vaccine(s) to purchase for maximum protection of your practice population, especially for at risk adults under 65 years of age, including pregnant women.

Practices will wish to consider if more than one type of vaccine should be ordered to best meet the needs of their practice population.

The “Green Book” guidance states:

“For adults in clinical risk groups a range of trivalent and quadrivalent inactivated vaccines are available from suppliers for GPs to purchase. Several studies indicate that the quadrivalent vaccine is likely to be cost effective compared with the trivalent vaccine (Meir *et al* 2015., Thommes *et al* 2015).

As the childhood programme will contribute to better control of influenza B overall, by reducing transmission across the population, modelling work by PHE has been conducted to understand the benefit of QIV in adults once the childhood programme is fully established in children of primary school age (Thorrington *et al.*, 2017). This model suggests that there are relatively small health benefits to be gained by the use of quadrivalent vaccines, compared with trivalent vaccines, in the elderly, but that the benefit is more substantial in at risk adults under 65 years of age, including pregnant women”.

The relevant chapter of the ‘Green Book’ can be found at:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/652682/Greenbook\\_chapter\\_19\\_flu.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/652682/Greenbook_chapter_19_flu.pdf)

## **Adjuvanted Vaccine**

The JCVI advises that adjuvanted vaccine is more effective and highly cost effective in those aged over 65 years, compared with the influenza vaccine currently used in the UK.

The JCVI has also advised that vaccination of those aged 75 years and over with the adjuvanted vaccine should be a priority, given that the un-adjuvanted inactivated vaccine has showed no significant effectiveness in this group over recent seasons, and the adjuvanted vaccine is therefore currently considered to be the only cost-effective option for this group.

The minutes of the JCVI's meeting dated 4 October 2017 can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/joint-committee-on-vaccination-and-immunisation#minutes><https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/joint-committee>

## **Children's immunisation**

- LAIV is the recommended vaccine for use in all eligible children age 2-17 years of age unless contraindicated.
- Eligible children contraindicated LAIV age 3-17 years should be offered a quadrivalent injectable influenza vaccine.
- Eligible children age 6 months to under 2 years of age should be offered a suitable trivalent injectable influenza vaccine.

## **Children's Flu Immunisation Programme**

The 2018-19 children's flu immunisation programme will offer live attenuated quadrivalent influenza vaccine to children aged 2 years to school year 6 (includes all primary school aged children). For the small number of eligible children for whom LAIV is unsuitable, a suitable quadrivalent inactivated vaccine should be offered, except in children aged under 3 years for whom no licensed quadrivalent injectable vaccine is available. Healthcare practitioners should refer to the "Green Book" influenza chapter for full details on contraindications and precautions for flu vaccines. This can be found at:

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/immunisation-against-infectious-disease-the-green-book](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immunisation-against-infectious-disease-the-green-book).

## **Ordering Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine**

Quadrivalent Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine (LAIV) for those children in the routine programme will be available to order via ImmForm from centrally available supplies, procured by Welsh Government, using the same systems as when ordering other vaccines for other national vaccination programmes. The supplied vaccine is Fluenz Tetra<sup>®</sup> nasal spray.

Practices should order LAIV weekly and match orders to planned clinics to reduce waste and maintain supply for all practices. LAIV has a very short shelf life, and has been purchased centrally in batches. Orders later in the season will have later expiry dates.

### Ordering vaccine for Children under 18 years in 'At Risk' Groups

Influenza vaccines are not licensed for children under 6 months of age. These infants can be passively protected through maternal flu vaccination.

#### Children aged 6 months to under 2 years

A suitable inactivated injectable trivalent vaccine should be available.

#### Children aged 2 years to under 18 years

LAIV is the preferred vaccine for children aged 2 to under 18 years in risk groups who are not contraindicated it. For the small number for whom LAIV is unsuitable, a suitable quadrivalent inactivated injectable vaccine should be available from 3 years of age, or for those age 2 years a suitable inactivated trivalent vaccine.

## **Vaccine Availability and Planning for Vaccination Sessions**

Vaccines are biological products which are subject to potential manufacturing delays.

The exact date on which supplies become available will not be known with any confidence until near the date and that supplies may be restricted initially, with more being available later in the season. This is more likely to occur with LAIV.

To avoid the need to cancel early influenza clinics, practices, clusters and health board teams are advised against arranging dates for vaccination clinics until confirmation is received of the dates when the vaccine will be delivered and the quantities available. Confirmation of delivery dates is usually received in early September.

You may wish to discuss the details of your plans for ordering supplies with your local Immunisation Co-ordinator.

## **Community Pharmacists**

Community pharmacies will again be invited to support the campaign in 2018-19 via the Community Pharmacy scheme. Health boards should seek to make arrangements with any community pharmacy in its area that meets the standards described in the nationally agreed service specification. Health boards should identify and build on examples of good practice where GP practices and community pharmacy partners have worked together to develop a co-ordinated approach that strengthens local arrangements, removes barriers to vaccine access and improves vaccine uptake in eligible groups.

## **NHS Wales Health Board and Trust Staff**

Health boards and trusts should order sufficient injectable vaccine for at least 60% of staff with direct patient contact.

### **Continuing Vaccination in the Current Season**

Thank you for your continued support to increase influenza vaccination uptake this season.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frank Atherton', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

**Dr Frank Atherton**  
**Chief Medical Officer / Medical Director NHS Wales**