



August 2018

To/Each Pharmacist

**Re: Important News**

Dear Colleague,

This letter contains important information about the 2018/2019 influenza vaccination campaign.

The World Health Organization has recommended that the seasonal influenza vaccines for the 2018/2019 season (Northern Hemisphere winter) contain:

- an A/Michigan/45/2015 (H1N1) pdm09-like virus;
- an A/Singapore/INFIMH-16-0019/2016 (H3N2)-like virus;
- a B/Colorado/06/2017-like virus (B/Victoria/2/87 lineage).

**For 2018/2019**

Please note the following recommendations from the National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC) - these will be included in revised chapters of the Immunisation Guidelines:

- Influenza vaccination is strongly recommended for most cancer patients.
  - If a person receiving chemotherapy has not received influenza vaccine 2 weeks or more before commencing treatment, the vaccine should be given during chemotherapy. However, the response to the vaccine may be blunted. A second vaccine is recommended in the same influenza season, a minimum of 4 weeks following a course of chemotherapy, if lymphocyte count is  $\geq 1.0 \times 10^9/L$  regardless of whether they have received influenza vaccines in previous seasons.
  - Patients on combination checkpoint inhibitors (e.g. ipilimumab plus nivolumab) **should not** receive any influenza vaccines, because of significant increased incidence of immune-related adverse reactions.
- Families and care providers of patients with cancer should be encouraged to receive an inactivated influenza vaccine, preferably before treatment is started.
- The HSE National Cold Chain Service will provide a seasonal influenza vaccine - **Influvac** manufactured by **Mylan**. **It will come as** pre-filled syringes in packs of 10.
- Fortnightly deliveries to all Pharmacies will commence on September 17<sup>th</sup> until January 18<sup>th</sup> 2019 (excluding Christmas holiday period). All practices will have received flu vaccine by September 28<sup>th</sup>, if they have placed an order according to their schedule.
- Patient held vaccination record cards will be sent with your vaccine delivery which should be completed and given to your patients after vaccination.
- New posters for display and a supply of leaflets for your patients are enclosed.

If you wish to order more information materials please visit [www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie) and order materials from there. Please set up a medical professional account if you do not have one already to order larger quantities of leaflets and posters.

Seasonal influenza vaccine is provided free for all those aged 65 years and over, those in at-risk groups, pregnant women and healthcare workers (including pharmacy staff) as outlined in the attachment with this letter. Those that do not have a medical card or GP visit card will be liable for a fee set by you. Claims for the vaccination of medical card or GP visit card holders in the groups as per the attachment can be made through the PCRS.

The seasonal influenza vaccine supplied by the **HSE National Cold Chain Service** is specifically for those in the at-risk groups. Vaccine for individuals outside of these groups can be obtained through the private market.

**Actions required by you:**

1. Place use **the online vaccine ordering system** from the HSE National Cold Chain Service to place your order for Seasonal Influenza (*Inactivated Influenza Vaccine (Influvac)*) for this year's campaign.
2. Use the returns service provided by the HSE National Cold Chain Service for any remaining influenza vaccine and any other expired vaccine.

Maximising uptake among at-risk groups and front-line health care workers is critical in the prevention of morbidity and mortality and your support in this regard is highly appreciated. In particular, please encourage your pregnant patients to be vaccinated to protect them and their infants.

If you require any further information or have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



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**AT RISK GROUPS ELIGIBLE TO BE VACCINATED BY PHARMACISTS  
AT THE PREMISES OF A RETAIL PHARMACY BUSINESS**

- Persons aged 65 and older
- Those aged 18 years and older
- With a long-term health condition such as:-
  - Chronic heart disease including acute coronary syndrome
  - Chronic liver disease
  - Chronic neurological disease including multiple sclerosis, hereditary and degenerative disorders of the central nervous system
  - Chronic renal failure
  - Chronic respiratory disease, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cystic fibrosis, moderate or severe asthma or bronchopulmonary dysplasia
  - Diabetes mellitus
  - Down syndrome
  - Haemoglobinopathies
  - Immunosuppression due to disease or treatment, including asplenia or splenic dysfunction and cancer patients
  - Morbid obesity, i.e. body mass index over 40
- Pregnant women (vaccine can be given at any stage of pregnancy)
- Healthcare workers
- Residents of nursing homes and other long stay institutions
- Carers
- People with regular contact with pigs, poultry or water fowl