

August 5, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Seasonal influenza poses serious health risks to the elderly, the very young, and those with weakened immune systems or other chronic health conditions. With the 2020-2021 Influenza season approaching we are requesting your assistance once again to prevent and control influenza in New Brunswick.

### Immunization

For the 2020-2021 influenza season, the Department of Health is offering a Universal Seasonal Influenza Program at no cost to New Brunswick residents. Quadrivalent influenza vaccine will be offered to individuals age 6 months and older including residents of a long-term care facility who are under the age of 65 year. Fluzone® High-Dose vaccine will be offered to residents aged 65 years and older living in long-term care facilities **only** (licensed nursing homes and adult residential facilities).

The Quadrivalent vaccine provides protection against four different influenza viruses: two influenza A viruses and two influenza B viruses. Fluzone High-Dose is a three-component (trivalent) inactivated influenza vaccine that is licensed specifically for people 65 years and older. The High-Dose vaccine contains four times the antigen of standard-dose inactivated influenza vaccines which is intended to give older people a stronger immune response, and therefore, better protection against influenza.

New Brunswick's influenza vaccine is expected to arrive in October. All orders will be reviewed to ensure equitable distribution to all health care providers. Priority groups will be established for supply distribution to ensure that individuals at highest risk receive vaccine first (i.e. hospitals, long-term facilities, etc.)

In the past years, manufacturers supplying Canada with influenza vaccine have experienced shortages or delays in the delivery of their vaccines for various reasons, which are beyond the control of the provinces and territories. To allow for sufficient time to deliver this year's influenza vaccine to your facility/clinic, **do not schedule your immunization clinics before you have received the vaccine**. Also, New Brunswick receives a percentage of the overall influenza vaccine order for the season **in four or more** shipments over several weeks, so you will **not** receive 100% of your vaccine order in the beginning.

To assist you in your practice, the "Seasonal Influenza Vaccine Information for Immunization Providers" will be available on line soon. This document is intended to provide answers to you and your clients' questions specific to the 2020-2021 seasonal influenza vaccine and pneumococcal vaccine. It incorporates the 2020-2021 NACI statement, the policies and standards outlined in the New Brunswick Immunization Program Guide, and information on **ordering and distribution**. We hope that it is a useful resource which will soon be posted online at:

[https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh/for\\_healthprofessionals/cdc.html](https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh/for_healthprofessionals/cdc.html)

For the 2020-2021 influenza season, vaccination services for residents of adult residential facilities (ARF) are being planned to include the New Brunswick Extramural Program working in collaboration with other partners. Providers will access Fluzone® High-Dose vaccine directly through Central Serum Depot.

### **Reporting**

The majority of influenza activity occurs between October and April, however OCMOH monitors influenza activity through our surveillance system year-round. As per the *Public Health Act* and Regulations, Regional Health Authorities are required to report all influenza cases to Regional Public Health including outbreaks, hospitalizations and deaths. For ongoing information on influenza activity, please see our weekly New Brunswick influenza report which is posted on our website at: [http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh/cdc/content/influenza/influenza\\_surveillance\\_activities.html](http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh/cdc/content/influenza/influenza_surveillance_activities.html).

The Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health (OCMOH) has compiled a report on the 2019-2020 New Brunswick Influenza Activity which includes highlights of the influenza season and data pertaining to laboratory, nursing home outbreaks, and associated hospitalizations which will be posted at the website above.

Thank you for your support and partnership in protecting the population of New Brunswick.

Sincerely,



Shelley Landsburg, BNRN MPH  
Director  
Disease Prevention and Control