



## 2021 PHARMACIST-ADMINISTERED INFLUENZA IMMUNISATION VACCINATION PROGRAM FOR OLDER PEOPLE INFORMATION FOR PHARMACIES

22 March 2021

### KEY MESSAGES

- Vaccination is the most important measure to prevent influenza and its complications.
- When feasible, the interval between influenza vaccination and COVID-19 vaccinations should be 14 or more days apart.
- Distribution of government-funded influenza vaccines for persons aged  $\geq 65$  years is planned to commence in late March.
- Community Pharmacies will be pre-allocated influenza vaccine doses for the first six weeks of the distribution period to ensure all eligible pharmacists can access NIP vaccine stocks. Details are provided below.
- Effective 1 March 2021, it is mandatory for all influenza vaccinations to be reported to the AIR, in accordance with the [Australian Immunisation Register Amendment \(Reporting\) Rules 2021](#).

### Government-funded influenza vaccine for people aged 65 years and over in 2021

Fluad® Quad is the only vaccine that is recommended for people aged 65 years and over in 2021.

#### Influenza virus strains included in the 2021 Southern Hemisphere influenza vaccines

The influenza virus strains included in the 2021 government-funded (egg-based) influenza vaccines in Australia are:

- A/Victoria/2570/2019 (H1N1) pdm09-like virus;
- A/Hong Kong/2671/2019 (H3N2)-like virus;
- B/Washington/02/2019-like (B/Victoria lineage) virus; and
- B/Phuket/3073/2013-like (B/Yamagata lineage) virus.

### Vaccine ordering and distribution

When will government-funded influenza vaccines be available for ordering?

- WA Health will commence distribution of government-funded 2021 influenza vaccine for 65's and over in late March, from mid-to-late April. All distribution to WA pharmacies will commence once vaccine supply is available from the manufacturers.
- For **Community Pharmacies** registered for the Pharmacist-Administered Influenza Vaccination Program for Older Adults, Fluad® Quad will be pre-allocated and all doses will be distributed through Sigma Healthcare.

## What are the changes for pharmacies in 2021?

### *Pre-allocation of Fluad® Quad*

- To support equitable distribution of influenza vaccines and pharmacy planning efforts, WA Health has partnered with the WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA), to pre-allocate seasonal influenza vaccine doses for the initial distribution period.
- The pre-allocated period will approximately six weeks from when distribution commences.
- You will receive an email with the doses pre-allocated to your pharmacy for review. PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOU CHECK YOUR SPAM/JUNK FOLDERS.
- All pharmacies will be offered a minimum of 50 doses (5 x 10 packs).
- You will have until Wednesday 24th March 2021 to review the doses pre-allocated to you.
- If you review your pre-allocated doses by this deadline, then you will receive Fluad® Quad from Monday 29th March 2021.
- Pharmacies that do not review their order in time will not receive vaccine in the first six weeks, and instead will be able to receive their pre-allocation after Monday 10th May 2021.
- Following the pre-allocation period (from Monday 10th May 2021) pharmacies registered for the program can order up to 40 doses on a fortnightly basis (4 x 10 packs) once their stock has exhausted. Delivery to pharmacies will be fortnightly.
- Participating pharmacies will be distributed Fluad® Quad vaccine at no cost through Sigma Healthcare wholesaler.
- Please note that your pharmacy does not have an account with Sigma Healthcare, there may be a delay in distribution.
- Pharmacies must not charge consumers for the cost of the vaccine.

### *After the pre-allocation period*

- Following the pre-allocation period, pharmacists will be able to access further supply of 2021 influenza vaccines through the Sigma Healthcare.

## Other important information related to vaccine management

- You are encouraged to review storage capacity for 2021 influenza vaccines at your pharmacy and determine if additional storage needs to be arranged. Please keep in mind that you may need to consider storage space for the COVID-19 vaccines at the same time as the influenza vaccines, if applicable.
- Please ensure that your site is compliant with the safe vaccine storage principles outlined in the [National Vaccine Storage Guidelines 'Strive for 5'](#).
- We urge you not to book your influenza vaccination clinic appointments until you have received your vaccines.

## Co-administration with COVID-19 vaccines

- There are currently no safety or immunogenicity data on co-administration of influenza vaccine and any COVID-19 vaccines.
- Influenza vaccine can be given before or after any dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, with a recommended minimum interval of 14 days between influenza and COVID-19 vaccine doses.
- The influenza vaccine can be given in between the 2 doses of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, which are recommended to be spaced 10-12 weeks apart
- For more information, refer to the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) [Advice on the relative timing of administering influenza and COVID-19 vaccines in 2021](#).

## Optimal timing of influenza vaccination in Western Australia

- While protection is generally expected to last for the whole season, protection against influenza starts to wane within the first 3 to 4 months following vaccination.
- So far this year influenza notifications are low and similar to levels reported in the inter-seasonal period.

- Providers are encouraged to administer influenza vaccinations shortly before the commencement of the typical influenza season in WA (June – July).
- However, an important consideration this year is the need to administer both influenza and COVID-19 vaccines to many of the same patients; effectively managing this schedule may take precedence in determining the timing of vaccinations.

### Recording influenza vaccines in the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR)

- AIR is the national whole-of-life immunisation register and all vaccines administered, including influenza vaccine, should be recorded in AIR, irrespective of the patient's age.
- Effective 1 March 2021, it is mandatory for all influenza vaccinations to be reported to the AIR, in accordance with the [Australian Immunisation Register Amendment \(Reporting\) Rules 2021](#).

### Reporting adverse events following immunisation

- Medical practitioners in WA have a statutory requirement to notify adverse events following immunisation (AEFIs) to the WA Department of Health as specified in the [Public Health Act 2016 \(external site\)](#) and the [Public Health Regulations 2017 \(external site\)](#).
- Health care providers can report possible AEFI using the online portal at [AEFI-CAN WAVSS](#). For more information on AEFIs and the Western Australian Vaccine Safety Surveillance System, [visit this website](#).

### Reporting cold chain breaches and vaccine wastage

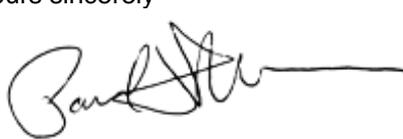
- As a condition to receive government-funded vaccines providers must follow the WA cold chain protocol, available on the [WA Health cold chain management website](#).
- Providers must advise their [WA Health public health unit](#) when a cold chain breach occurs or to seek thermal stability advice for other incidents where government-funded vaccines are involved.
- Vaccines discarded for any reason, must be reported to WA health via the Cold Chain Breach (CCB) and Vaccine Wastage Form available on the [WA Health cold chain management website](#).
- All 2020 formulation of influenza vaccines have now expired and should be *disposed of immediately* to avoid vaccine administration errors.
- You must report vaccine expiry wastage, using the online Seasonal Influenza Vaccine Expiry Report Form available from the WA Health cold chain management website.

### Keeping up to date with current information

- WA Health will contact you with further updates as necessary when key information becomes available.
- To stay up-to-date make sure you have subscribed to Vaccine Updates email distribution list at <https://health.us20.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=32cc4a56e0e39b38a4d4cf223&id=ed01e3d6a4>
- This letter should be read in conjunction with further information available in the [Australian Immunisation Handbook](#) and the [WA Immunisation Schedule](#).

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to protecting Western Australians from influenza.

Yours sincerely



Professor Paul Effler, MD, MPH, FAFPHM

**SENIOR MEDICAL ADVISOR**  
**WA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
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