



## 2021 WA GOVERNMENT-FUNDED INFLUENZA IMMUNISATION PROGRAM

### INFORMATION FOR IMMUNISATION PROVIDERS

22 March 2021

#### KEY MESSAGES

- Annual influenza vaccination is recommended for all people  $\geq 6$  months of age. 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, with vaccines for other cohorts following from mid-to-late April.
- General Practices and Community Pharmacies will be pre-allocated influenza vaccine doses for the initial distribution period to ensure all eligible providers can access NIP vaccine stocks early in the roll-out. 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 vaccines for distribution to WA immunisation providers in 2021

The table below indicates which of the five government-funded vaccine brands should be used in which age cohorts.

2021 WA PRODUCT ORDER GUIDE						
Cohort	Program / Brand	Vaxigrip Tetra	Afluria Quad	Fluarix Tetra	FluQuadri	Fluad Quad
All children 6 months to <5 years	NIP	✓		*		
All primary school children $\geq 5$ years	State				✓	
At risk persons 5 to <65 years	NIP	✓	✓	✓		
All adults 65 years and over	NIP					✓

\* Fluarix Tetra is licensed for age cohort - Vaxigrip Tetra supplied in WA for children less than 5 years

Review the WA Immunisation Schedule (at risk persons includes ATSI, pregnant women, MRC)

All government funded vaccines have no latex present. All are needlessly presentation except Fluarix Tetra.

Based on previous experience, there will be sufficient quantities of government-funded vaccine available for **all persons** who are eligible in WA, though occasional, temporary supply constraints may occur, pending deliveries from manufacturers.

#### 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, with vaccine for other cohorts to follow from mid-to-late April. All distribution to WA providers will commence once vaccine supply is available from the manufacturers.
- The vaccine ordering system will be updated with key messaging and instructions regarding influenza vaccine product availability.
- For all **General Practices** in metropolitan and regional WA, changes to the ordering process of government-funded influenza vaccines in 2021 are detailed in the next section.
- For **Community Pharmacies** registered for the Pharmacist-Administered Influenza Vaccination Program for Older Adults, Fluad® Quad will be pre-allocated based on 2020 usage and all doses will be distributed through Sigma Healthcare.
- For providers including **Community Health Clinics, Residential Aged Care Facilities, Aboriginal Medical Services and University Health Clinics**, the ordering and distribution process remains unchanged.

### What are the changes for General Practice in 2021?

#### *Pre-allocation period*

- To support equitable distribution of influenza vaccines and GP clinic planning efforts, WA Health has partnered with the WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA), in consultation with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) to pre-allocate seasonal influenza vaccine doses for the initial distribution period.
- The pre-allocation period will be approximately six weeks from when distribution commences.
- The pre-allocation request process is now complete.
- For new general practices who did not respond to the pre-allocation request for data and/or confirmation, refer to the FAQ [here](#).
- For general practices that participated in the pre-allocation process, the WAPHA portal will display the number of doses pre-allocated, by anticipated delivery period as they become available. For assistance to access the portal refer to the FAQ [here](#).
- As such, each week, pre-allocation orders will be uploaded to the on-line ordering system, and routine email notifications to GPs regarding their order details will occur. All vaccine orders approved through the pre-allocation process will have the prefix 'FLU' in the order number.

#### *After the pre-allocation period*

- Following the pre-allocation period, GPs will be able to access further supply of 2021 influenza vaccines through the [WA Health online vaccine ordering system](#).

### Other important information related to vaccine management

- You are encouraged to review storage capacity for 2021 influenza vaccines in your clinic 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.
- When scheduling influenza and COVID-19 vaccines, consider the following principles:
  - *Individuals in phase 1a for COVID-19 vaccination should receive the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as it is available to them, and then receive their influenza vaccine.*
  - *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](#).

## Eligible groups

The following individuals in WA are eligible to receive government-funded vaccine:

- persons 65 years or older
- children 6 months to less than 5 years
- primary school-aged children (from 5 years to students in year 6)
- pregnant women (any trimester)
- Aboriginal people 6 months and older
- individuals 6 months and older with medical conditions that place them at risk for complications of influenza, including:
  - cardiac disease
  - chronic respiratory conditions
  - chronic neurological conditions
  - impaired immunity
  - diabetes and other metabolic disorders
  - renal disease
  - haematological disorders
  - children aged 6 months to 10 years receiving long-term aspirin therapy.

For further information, see the [WA Immunisation Schedule](#).

## 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

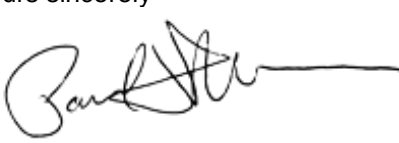
- As a condition to receive government-funded vaccines providers must follow the WA cold chain protocol, available on the [WA Health cold chain management website](#).
- Providers must advise their [WA Health public health unit](#) when a cold chain breach occurs or to seek thermal stability advice for 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



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**SENIOR MEDICAL ADVISOR  
WA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

Monday, 22 March 2021