

Influenza Vaccine Campaign 2022-2023: Bulletin #2

The provincial influenza vaccination campaign is well underway. Please find below a few updates.

Vaccine appointment booking for primary care clinics: There is some confusion among patients about access to influenza vaccine this fall and in particular how to get vaccinated at your offices.

- Primary care clinicians carrying influenza vaccine should immunize patients as per your usual clinic procedures. Please offer vaccine proactively at all appointments or at influenza vaccine specific appointments booked by your clinic. Your patients do not need to be booked or registered through the provincial online or phone-based “Get Vaccinated” appointment booking system to get a vaccine appointment in your office.
- Individuals 6 months and older can be immunized at health authority fall booster clinics, and 12 years and older can also be immunized at pharmacies. A few pharmacies are immunizing young children starting at 4 years of age. These appointments should be booked through the provincial “Get Vaccinated” system. Limited walk-in appointments may be available.

Vaccine inventory and products: All offices interested in offering influenza vaccine have received their initial vaccine allocation; we are now filling reorders.

- **Flumist® Quadrivalent** is now available for ordering; please offer to children 2-17 years of age.
- Inventory of **Fluad® Trivalent** (for those 65+ years old) is running low. Please do not lose an immunization opportunity. Seniors can also be offered **Fluzone® Quadrivalent**. Seniors preferring **Fluzone® High Dose** may purchase a dose at travel clinics, including VCH Travel Clinic and pharmacies.
- You may find new influenza vaccine products in your re-orders: **Flulaval Tetra** is available for immunization of individuals 6 months and older. Other products including **Afluria® Tetra** may be coming later in November.

An update on *Shigella*: Change in circulating strain from *S. flexneri* to *S. sonnei*

Last year, we had notified you of an outbreak of *Shigella flexneri* among residents of the Downtown Eastside. Empiric antibiotic treatment with Azithromycin was recommended at that point. Please discontinue that guidance as: (1) the currently circulating strain is now *Shigella sonnei* and (2) this strain is multidrug resistant and exhibits resistance to all first line oral antibiotic agents, including azithromycin. Currently, all isolates of *S. sonnei* have been shown to be fully susceptible to ceftriaxone. (Cefixime is not recommended due to high failure rates in shigellosis.)

S. sonnei infection can present with watery or bloody diarrhea, severe abdominal cramps, tenesmus, fever, nausea, and vomiting. Transmission is via the fecal-oral route, through consumption of contaminated food or water, sexual activity, or contact with contaminated surfaces. People who are underhoused, living in congregate settings or men who have sex with men are at an increased risk of infection.

Updated recommendations for management of bloody or severe diarrhea:

- Perform stool culture and sensitivity to guide antibiotic treatment.
- Individuals with moderate to severe illness and suspected shigellosis should be referred to a hospital ED for **IV ceftriaxone** treatment. If your client is unable to access an ED (e.g. because of complex mental health/addiction issues), please call 604-675-3900 to refer your client for outreach support.
- Continue to emphasize rigorous hand hygiene to all patients experiencing gastrointestinal symptoms.

You can reach a Medical Health Officer at 604.675.3900 Toll free at 1.855.675.3900
For public health emergencies after hours contact the Medical Health Officer on call at 604.527.4893

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To receive these updates by email please contact us at: VCHPhysiciansUpdate@vch.ca