

High Dose Seasonal Influenza Vaccine for Eligible Seniors Aged 65 Years and Older

Questions & Answers for Health Care Providers

The following is a set of commonly asked questions and answers to help guide health care providers in the implementation of Fluzone® High-Dose for seniors aged 65 years and older who are eligible as part of Manitoba's Seasonal Influenza Immunization Program.

1. Who is eligible for the high-dose influenza vaccine as part of Manitoba's Seasonal Influenza Immunization Program?

High-dose influenza vaccine is being offered as part of Manitoba's Seasonal Influenza Immunization Program to individuals who are 65 years of age and older, and are:

- residents of long-term care facilities, including chronic care residents, OR
- residents of supportive and assisted living housing, OR
- clients in interim or transitional care beds and respite care clients, as well as new, unimmunized residents admitted to a long-term care facility during the flu season, OR
- in a provincial correctional facility, including those who are newly incarcerated or transferred from other federal or out of province correctional facilities, OR
- receiving homecare services, while on a waiting list for admission into a long-term care facility, OR
- living on a First Nation, remote or isolated community, OR
- living north of the 53rd parallel of latitude

Fluzone® High-Dose is an inactivated influenza vaccine that protects against the three influenza strains predicted to be circulating in North America each season. Two of the included strains are Influenza A strains and one is an Influenza B strain. Fluzone® High-Dose contains four times the amount of influenza virus antigen for each strain compared to the standard-dose influenza vaccine, and is expected to provide better protection in seniors against seasonal influenza compared to the standard-dose influenza vaccine.

If a person who is eligible for the high-dose vaccine declines, the standard-dose influenza vaccine is also available and should be offered.

2. How was the eligibility for the Fluzone® High-Dose vaccine determined?

One of Manitoba's objectives in managing the Covid-19 pandemic is to reduce the need for health

system utilization as the system treats those infected with Covid-19. With this in mind, Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living (MHSAL), in consultation with provincial vaccine experts, is aiming to protect more of those who are at highest risk of complications from influenza.

Lower respiratory tract infections including pneumonia, bronchitis and tracheobronchitis are leading causes of admission to hospital in adults aged 65 years or older, especially in frail older adults. Fluzone® High-Dose is expected to provide superior protection against influenza among these individuals.

3. Since Fluzone® High-Dose only protects against three strains, what about the fourth strain? Is protection against the fourth strain important?

Fluzone® High-Dose is expected to provide superior protection against influenza A(H3N2) disease in particular. This strain has historically produced a disproportionate burden of illness (morbidity and mortality) in those 65 years of age and over. Influenza B, although an important cause of illness, produces less morbidity and mortality in this age group.

The World Health Organization recommends which influenza B strain should be included in all trivalent influenza vaccines, including the high-dose vaccine.

The strains that circulate throughout the influenza season cannot be predicted with certainty.

4. If there was a B strain mismatch this year, should I immunize my client who received the high-dose vaccine with the four-strain, standard-dose influenza vaccine later in the season?

No. Currently one dose of influenza vaccine is recommended each year, even if there is a mismatch of circulating influenza strains.

Every circulating influenza strain can cause severe illness in any population. Although influenza caused by the B strain can be an important cause of illness, it tends to produce less morbidity and mortality in those 65 years of age and older.

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5. How are long-term care facility (LTCF), Assisted Living, and Supportive Housing defined for the purposes of Fluzone® High-Dose eligibility?

For the purposes of eligibility for Fluzone® High-Dose, LTCFs are defined as residential facilities for predominantly older persons with chronic illness or disability, also known as personal care homes or nursing homes.

Supportive Housing are facilities for people who require access to 24 hour supervision and some assistance managing with physical limitations, or ongoing health conditions. The rent and services components are paid by the resident. The support component of this service is funded through the Regional Health Authorities of Manitoba.

Assisted living sites, also referred to as Independent Living or Retirement Residence with services, are private seniors living buildings where tenants rent suites. The residence may offer various services such as housekeeping, meals, and recreation.

Clients living in the following community-based housing “alternatives” are not eligible for publicly funded Fluzone® High-Dose:

- Manitoba Families housing with support options (such as group homes)

Manitobans who are 65 years of age and older who do not fall under the criteria for Fluzone® High-Dose as part of Manitoba’s Seasonal Influenza Immunization Program should be offered standard-dose influenza vaccine free-of-charge. Alternatively, a prescription can be provided for those who are not eligible where they can purchase Fluzone® High-Dose vaccine privately from a pharmacy, if available.

Please consult MHSAL via email at vaccines@gov.mb.ca if you are unsure of your client’s eligibility for publicly funded Fluzone® High-Dose.

6. Is Fluzone® High-Dose Effective?

Fluzone® High-Dose has been shown to be effective in preventing laboratory confirmed influenza and hospitalizations due to influenza-like-illness in randomized controlled trials. Please see the current National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) influenza statement for a more detailed review (www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/national-advisory-committee-on-immunization-naci.html).

7. Is Fluzone® High-Dose safe?

Fluzone® High-Dose has been authorized for use in Canada since 2015 and in the United States since 2009. Approximately 70 million doses of Fluzone® High-Dose have been distributed in the United States since its licensure.

Fluzone® High-Dose has been observed to produce a higher rate of some local and systemic reactions compared to the standard-dose influenza vaccine. Studies have reported higher rates of malaise, myalgia and fever. Most systemic reactions were mild and resolved within three days. Serious adverse events were rare, and similar in frequency between the standard-dose inactivated influenza vaccine and Fluzone® High-Dose.

Any adverse events following immunization are to be reported based on Provincial requirements (www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/div/ae/fi.html)

8. What if my patient refuses Fluzone® High-Dose?

Patients who decline Fluzone® High-Dose may be offered standard-dose influenza vaccine if supply permits.

9. Is a separate consent form required for Fluzone® High-Dose?

MHSAL’s Seasonal Influenza and Pneumococcal Vaccine Consent Form is not product specific (www.manitoba.ca/health/flu/docs/flupneumo_consentform.pdf). Therefore, MHSAL’s form (or other regionally developed forms) continue to be suitable for the purposes of obtaining consent for Fluzone® High-Dose (provided product specific information is not included as part of the consent form).

Please review Manitoba’s Informed Consent Guidelines for Immunization for more information on consent: www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/protocol/consentguidelines.pdf

10. What if a client less than 65 years of age gets Fluzone® High-Dose?

Fluzone® High-Dose is not indicated for use in individuals less than 65 years of age. There is currently limited published safety and/or effectiveness data in adults less than 65 years of age. However, it would be reasonable to expect a robust immune response in this situation. Patients less than 65 years of age that inadvertently receive Fluzone® High-Dose are NOT recommended to be re-immunized with standard-dose influenza vaccine.

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11. How do immunization providers (public health nurse/ physician/ pharmacist) get remunerated for the administration of Fluzone® High-Dose?

All Fluzone® High-Dose vaccines administered to Manitobans must be documented and recorded in the Manitoba Immunization Registry by: (1) direct entry into the Public Health Information Management System (PHIMS)/ Physician Billings/ Drug Program Information Network (DPIN); or, (2) manual completion of the *Immunization Inputting Form for Health Care Providers* (www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/div/docs/iifhpc.pdf).

The Fluzone® High-Dose tariff code (8775) has been included in The Physician's Manual. However, the Fluzone® High-Dose vaccine offered as part of Manitoba's Seasonal Influenza Immunization Program will only be available for those who provide services to those who are eligible. Distribution of Fluzone® High-Dose vaccine will be monitored. Any fee-for-service physicians concerned about remuneration for Fluzone® High-Dose should contact MHSAL at vaccines@gov.mb.ca.

12. If my patient was given Fluzone® High-Dose last year, do they have to get Fluzone® High-Dose this year too?

Being immunized against influenza every year is important in order to have the best protection against influenza and its complications.

Different influenza vaccine products may be used each season (barring any contraindications). The administration of Fluzone® High-Dose in any given year does not mean that those same individuals must also receive Fluzone® High-Dose in subsequent years. Seasonal influenza vaccine product selection in one season has no impact on future influenza vaccine product selections.

13. Can I give Fluzone® High-Dose at the same time as Pneumovax® 23 (and other vaccines, such as Zostavax® or Shingrix®)?

Yes. Simultaneous administration of several distinct vaccines may take place without immune interference if vaccines are administered at sites draining into distinct lymph node areas (e.g. left and right arm).

Please refer to the product monograph for more details.

14. Where can I get more information about Fluzone® High-Dose and Manitoba's Seasonal Influenza Immunization Program?

Manitoba's Seasonal Influenza Website:

www.manitoba.ca/flu

Manitoba's Seasonal Influenza Immunization Program Plan includes details on Manitoba's Seasonal Influenza Immunization program, links to the National Advisory Committee (NACI) annual influenza statement, and the product monographs:

www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/div/manual/docs/msiipp.pdf