

## FACTSHEET: INFLUENZA

### INFLUENZA

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) encourages influenza vaccine for all Canadians aged 6 months and older who do not have contraindications to the vaccine. Societal costs as well as significant illness occur with seasonal influenza in people who may not be considered at high risk of complications (i.e. healthy people aged 5 to 64 years).<sup>1</sup> Immunization with currently available influenza vaccines is not recommended for infants less than 6 months of age.<sup>1</sup>

NACI suggests that immunization programs should focus on 3 priority groups for influenza vaccination programs, 2 of which include children:\*

- at high risk of influenza-related complications or hospitalization (e.g., those with chronic health conditions including severe obesity).
- capable of transmitting influenza to individuals at high risk of complications.<sup>1</sup>

### Disease and Incidence

Influenza is a respiratory infection caused primarily by influenza A or B viruses.<sup>2</sup>

- It is estimated that 20%–30% of children become infected with influenza each year.<sup>2</sup>
- Influenza B has accounted for 17% (average) of all positive laboratory-confirmed tests for influenza, The circulation of influenza B predominantly follows influenza A and typically peaks in the spring.<sup>1</sup>
- Rates of influenza infection are highest in children aged 5-9 years, but rates of serious illness and death are highest in children under 2 years (and older persons >65 years), and persons with underlying medical conditions.<sup>1</sup>

### Vaccine

A quadrivalent formulation of influenza vaccine is recommended for use in children and adolescents 6 mos –17 years of age. If a quadrivalent vaccine is not available, a trivalent influenza vaccine should be used.<sup>3,4</sup>

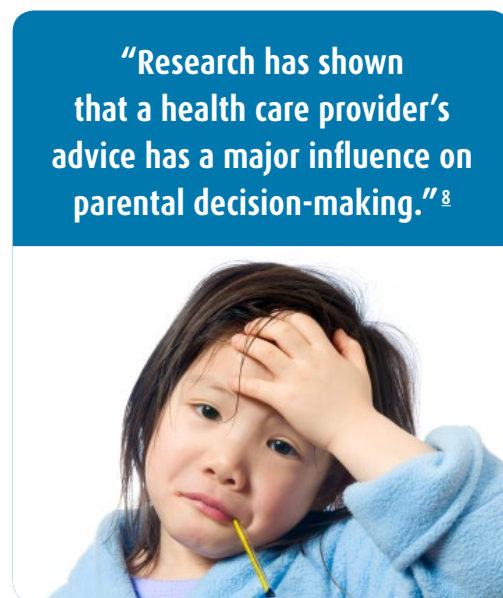
In BC, influenza vaccines can be accessed through Public Health programs or privately.

#### Public Health

In BC, eligibility for free influenza vaccines for children may vary yearly (see 2016-17 below)<sup>3</sup>:

AGE	VACCINE	COMMENTS
6 months – 23 months of age	• Flulaval® Tetra	For children 6-23 months of age, Flulaval® Tetra is the recommended product. If Flulaval® Tetra is unavailable Fluviral® or Agriflu® should be used.
2-17 years of age	• Flumist® Quadrivalent (LAIV) • Flulaval® Tetra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is an intranasal spray administration video available at: <a href="http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/immunization/vaccine-administration/flumist-intranasal-spray">http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/immunization/vaccine-administration/flumist-intranasal-spray</a></li> <li>• If a quadrivalent product is unavailable, Fluviral® or Agriflu® should be used.</li> </ul>

\*The third priority group is those who provide essential community services.



“Research has shown that a health care provider’s advice has a major influence on parental decision-making.”<sup>8</sup>



- ImmunizeBC  
[www.immunizebc.ca/diseases-vaccinations/influenza](http://www.immunizebc.ca/diseases-vaccinations/influenza)
- BCCDC Manual Seasonal Influenza Vaccine section  
[www.bccdc.ca/dis-cond/comm-manual/CDManualChap2.htm](http://www.bccdc.ca/dis-cond/comm-manual/CDManualChap2.htm)



Private Access

Several vaccines are available for private purchase in Canada<sup>3</sup>:

Inactivated Influenza Vaccines	Trivalent Inactivated Influenza Vaccines	Agriflu <sup>®</sup> , Fluviral <sup>®</sup> , Fluzone <sup>®</sup> , Vaxigrip <sup>®</sup>
	Quadrivalent Inactivated Influenza Vaccines	Flulaval <sup>®</sup> Tetra, Fluzone <sup>®</sup> Quadrivalent
	Trivalent Inactivated Influenza Vaccine plus adjuvant	Fluad Pediatric <sup>™</sup>
Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine (LAIV)		Flumist <sup>®</sup> Quadrivalent

If a child is not eligible for publicly funded vaccines,

- the vaccine can be purchased from some pharmacies and travel clinics. Refer parents to the BC Pediatric Society resource [NPF Vaccines: Access](#) for the steps to follow to obtain vaccines from their pharmacist for you to administer in your office.
- consider having a small supply of private vaccines in your clinic.
- consider working through the HealthLinkBC Files for categories of eligibility with parents to determine if they have overlooked a category.<sup>5,6</sup>

TAKE AWAY FOR PARENT DISCUSSION

- The BC Pediatric Society recommends Influenza vaccines yearly for children ≥ 6 months (two doses in 1st year of vaccine receipt).<sup>7</sup>
- Younger children (under 2 years of age) are at higher risk of severe illness compared to other age groups.
- Although BC Public Health Clinics typically start after the Thanksgiving holiday, influenza vaccines are available privately by the end of September.

One of the most important questions on a parent’s mind about vaccines is: **“What is your recommendation as a health care provider?”**

Visit the BC Pediatric Society website for Immunization Information for Physicians and for Families at [www.bcpeds.ca](http://www.bcpeds.ca)

Please note that the information in this document is provided for educational purposes only, is not intended to provide medical advice and should in no way replace clinical judgment of the healthcare professional.



### REFERENCE LIST

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