

Flu Vaccination 2021 – Frequently Asked Questions

The FAQ below regroups the major questions asked by Family Physicians and responses from VCH and the North Shore Division as of **November 29, 2021**. It has been adapted from the FAQ initially developed for the Vancouver Division. The FAQ will be updated as more information is provided by VCH and further questions proposed by FPs.

1. What is the overall strategy for flu vaccination 2021?

Year over year (even in 2020) North Shore Family Physician offices administer approximately 40% of flu vaccine (pharmacies administer approximately 40%, and the rest via Public Health).

We expect this year to be similar to other years where the majority of family practices administer influenza vaccines to patients they typically vaccinate, with pharmacies and Public Health also offering vaccinations.

2. Is a free vaccine available to everyone this year?

There are no changes to eligibility criteria this year. Influenza vaccine is recommended for everybody and provided free to individuals at high risk of influenza complications (children 6-59 months, seniors, pregnant women, people 5-64 years with underlying chronic health conditions), those in contact with people at high risk including visitors to health care facilities, and essential community service providers.

3. Will there be enough flu vaccine this year?

Yes. VCH has added 20% more vaccine doses in anticipation of higher vaccine volumes in 2021.

4. What is the vaccine distribution schedule?

The exact vaccine distribution schedule depends on manufacturer delivery dates.

Like prior years, VCH prioritizes immunization for long-term care homes, hospital pharmacies and healthcare professionals, followed by distribution to family practices and others.

VCH released initial vaccine allocations to family practices during the week of October 4th, 2021.

VCH expects to receive additional vaccine supply mid-October.

5. Is it possible to have the vaccine delivered to my clinic?

Yes. The North Shore Division of Family Practice has partnered with VCH and MTS Logistics/Medi-Tran Services to deliver influenza vaccines to your clinics from **October 2021 until March 2022**. This year clinics can have their initial influenza vaccine allocation and re-orders delivered by MTS. This Division-funded support will allow for delivery of influenza vaccinations in a safe and timely manner directly to your clinic.

*Please note that the Division will support deliveries that include influenza vaccine and other routine vaccines (placed in the same order) until December 31, 2021. After this date, the delivery option will be limited to orders that consist of **only influenza vaccine (from January 2022 until March 2022)**.*

Your clinic should have received a communication from VCH about initial vaccine allocations and the option for delivery of your initial allocation and re-orders. If you haven't received VCH communication or haven't replied, please email nsbiologicals@vch.ca, and copy nsvaccine@mtslogistics.com if you want delivery right away.

6. Our clinic wants to pick up our initial allocation. What's the process?

Please contact nsbiologicals@vch.ca and indicate your preference for pick-up or delivery.

7. Who is allowed to pick up vaccine?

VCH allows anyone associated with the clinic to pick up vaccine. It does NOT have to be a physician. Everyone is expected to transport the vaccine in a way that supports the cold chain.

VCH recommends that a physician or knowledgeable staff person pick up the initial vaccine allotment so that a conversation can be had with the distribution manager about your projected total amount of vaccine and mix (injectable, nasal, etc.), ensuring the depot can plan accordingly.

8. How should I transport the vaccine?

This is unchanged from prior years. Best practice requires a cooler, cold water blankets and ice packs. Keep in mind that syringe format products require much more space than multi-dose vials for transport & storage

9. Which influenza vaccines will I receive?

VCH has received the bulk of its annual vaccine order and will roll out supply in the coming weeks/months. They cannot guarantee the vaccine type(s) you will receive and when they will be received; however, these are what will be available over the season:

- Standard injectable vaccine types ARE AVAILABLE (FluLaval Tetra[®], Fluzone Quadrivalent[®])
- Flumist[®] AVAILABLE for distribution as of mid-to-late October
- Fluad for seniors is NOT AVAILABLE this season
- Fluzone HD ONLY available for long term care and assisted living facilities and will not be distributed to clinics as part of the publicly-funded vaccines.

10. What impacts which vaccines VCH receives and when? Does VCH withhold vaccine distribution?

The supply chain for flu vaccines involves manufacturing and then transport between several organizations. Flu vaccine is delivered from the different manufacturers on different dates to the BCCDC (the provincial depot), and from there it is distributed to the Health Authorities.

VCH distributes all the vaccine it receives as quickly as it can once it is received centrally from the BCCDC.

11. Why can't I receive my entire allocation now?

VCH receives 50% of its total influenza vaccine supply in late September (for distribution in early October). The initial allocation allows the maximum number of community providers to have access to vaccine, while VCH waits for additional supply in October.

12. When can I get more vaccine?

VCH will be ready to fill your re-orders as of **October 19th**.

13. When can I schedule high-volume vaccination clinics for my patients?

We recommend that you schedule your high-volume clinics once you have adequate vaccine supply (after October 25), unless your initial vaccine allocation is sufficient for you to run these clinics now.

14. Can I get less vaccine than prior years? I won't be immunizing as many patients this year

Yes. You only need to request the amount of vaccine that you realistically expect to use this year.

15. What are the clinic protocols and PPE requirements I should follow for patient visits?

The recently updated [COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for Community-Based Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, Nurses and Midwives in Clinic Settings](#) outlines appropriate infection prevention and control measures given what we now know about the current risk of community transmission. The guidance includes updated information on the appropriate use of personal protective equipment, physical distancing and capacity limits, and screening for COVID-19 symptoms.

The medical mask [requirements](#) for health-care settings, including primary care provider offices, remain in effect.

Please refer to the BCCDC [Immunization Manual](#) for more specific information.

16. How can I get PPE?

Family Physicians in BC can now order PPE Supplies using the provincial PPE Portal website. Your clinic should have received a letter from the Ministry of Health back in December 2020 with instructions on how to sign up and place orders moving forward.

If you did not receive a letter from the Ministry of Health by December 15, 2020, please e-mail health.ppe@gov.bc.ca for further assistance.

This [memo](#) from the Minister of Health provides more information on the registration process and also outlines what kinds of supplies are available and maximum size of orders.

17. Is the recommended wait time post-injection still 15 minutes?

VCH Public Health and the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) still recommend a 15-minute post-injection observation period if physical distancing can be observed.

A shorter observation period between 5-15 minutes may be considered if the conditions below are met:

- Client has received influenza vaccine before and did not have a severe reaction;
- No history of immediate post-vaccination reactions following any vaccines (e.g., syncope);
- There's another adult who can monitor the vaccine recipient for 15 minutes;
- The vaccine recipient is not operating a motorized or another wheeled transportation device for a min of 15 minutes (so they can wait in the parking lot for the total 15 minutes);
- The vaccine recipient/responsible adult knows when to seek post vaccination advice/medical assistance;

- The client agrees to wait in the post-vaccination waiting area for the reduced observation period

18. Which pharmacies will provide publicly-funded vaccinations, and to which patients?

[This website](#) has the list of pharmacies that will provide vaccinations.

Keep in mind the following if you refer patients to pharmacies:

- Many pharmacies are still making their vaccination clinic plans, so information may change
- Many pharmacies are scheduling appointments for vaccinations – patients should communicate directly with the pharmacies (web/phone) to get an appointment
- Pharmacists may immunize children 5 years and above with an injectable vaccine and may administer intranasal immunizations for children 2 years and above. Some pharmacists choose/prefer to not immunize children that young.
- Most pharmacies have private vaccine available for sale to patients who are not eligible for publicly-funded vaccine.

19. What if I cannot vaccinate my patients this year (illness, risk, space, etc.)

We are here to support you. Please reach out to us at northshore@divisionsbc.ca to discuss options available to your patients.

20. How much vaccine will I receive in my initial vaccine allotment?

To ensure that every community provider has access to vaccine as quickly as possible, VCH limits the initial distributions based on your clinic's total vaccine doses administered in 2019. If you are planning higher volume vaccination clinics and you know how much you expect to need for those events, please contact nsbiologicals@vch.ca to ensure you have enough vaccine for those patients.

21. What proportion of injection vs inhalable vaccines will I receive?

The initial proportions will be based on your 2020/21 usage. Of note, VCH is receiving roughly the same amount of Flumist as last season. Allocations for this specific product will remain similar to last year.

22. How do I request more vaccine?

You can email (preferred) or fax your local CHC that normally supplies your biologicals. If you'd like to have your influenza vaccine re-orders **delivered**, please indicate this, and copy nsvaccine@mtslogistics.com in the communication to your CHC. The CHC will contact your clinic by email once the order is filled. VCH is targeting to have your order

ready for pickup or delivery within 1-2 business days.

23. What are the details around family immunization clinics?

The ICBC centre (255 Lloyd Avenue) will be running family immunization clinics for the flu vaccine from October 20 - November 27, 2021. Specific dates and hours of operation can be found here: <https://immunizebc.ca/node/56544>

Please note that visits are by appointment only: <https://nspublichealth.janeapp.com>

Families with young children will be prioritized. Adults are encouraged to seek out flu vaccine at a pharmacist or through their family doctor.

More information on VCH public immunization clinics can be found at vch.ca/flu. *Please note that there may be changes to sites or dates as we move through this unique flu season.*

24. What vaccine location information can we provide to patients who live outside of the North Shore?

The [Immunize BC website](#) offers a searchable option for communities around BC.

25. Can you explain the temporary fee code change for immunizing patients during a standard visit?

Effective October 1, 2021, the 2020/21 temporary fee codes for adult respiratory immunization have been reactivated.

The 10040 code (\$5.43) allows immunizations for influenza (ICD9 V048) and pneumococcus (ICD9 V05) to be billed in addition to a medically necessary visit.

The 10041 code (\$14.00) applies to visits where the primary purpose of the service is for immunization for influenza and/or pneumococcus.

Additionally, *pertussis immunization in pregnancy* (ICD9 V036) now qualifies for these temporary fee codes.

If you provide two immunizations (ie. influenza + pneumococcus or influenza + pertussis), both immunizations can be billed, but the second claim must be submitted with submission code D or it will be refused.

More information can be found on the BC Family Doctors website. (Better link: [billing-for-respiratory-immunizations-in-2021-2022](#))