Immunisation of people in the priority groups

This year’s influenza immunisation programme began early for those at greatest risk of influenza, and healthcare and other frontline workers, to ensure they had priority access to the large but finite supply of influenza vaccine.

Due to the Alert Level 4 situation we will be extending the timeframe for priority only flu vaccines, so we ensure as many of those eligible people as possible get immunised. The exact timeframes will be communicated in the coming week but is likely to be until the end of April. This is still well ahead of the anticipated flu season of late May.

Those eligible for early vaccination include:

- People aged 65 and over, pregnant women, people with certain chronic conditions and young children with a history of severe respiratory illness
- Healthcare and other frontline workers, which includes emergency services, social services, police, defence, and border control but not supermarket workers.

We urge providers more than ever to make sure influenza vaccination is made available to the greatest extent to these communities, particularly kuia, koroua and hapū māmā.

Every vaccine given to a healthy adult is one that can't be given to someone at greater risk of serious illness. We all need to work together to protect our most vulnerable.

If you have extra vaccines in stock beyond what you’re likely to need over the next two weeks, we expect you to be working with your Immunisation Coordinators and colleagues to make sure that the most vulnerable people in your communities are protected.

People who are not eligible for free vaccination are asked to wait. We will provide further advice when vaccination opens to all.

Influenza vaccine supply

We are aware that some practices have had difficulty with accessing vaccine supplies – the first 800,000 doses of influenza vaccine were distributed according to the usual first come first served basis.

In addition to this, 100,000 doses of Influvac Tetra have arrived in New Zealand and distribution has commenced, with 200,000 more currently in transit.

We expect 1.768 million doses in total this season, 400,000 more than in any previous year.

To order influenza vaccine, please place your order with HCL through the normal process. Because this is a different brand of vaccine new orders will need to be made. All orders will be reviewed by the Ministry of Health and the DHB Immunisation Coordinators, or nominated delegate, for your region. This is to ensure that stock is distributed to where it is most needed.

Please ensure you record influenza vaccinations on the NIR

Wherever possible, please make sure you record influenza vaccination on the NIR. The NIR is the most accurate source of information for the Ministry about how many vaccines have been administered and how many are still likely to be in circulation and guides our decision-making on this issue.

If you have any queries about anything in this update, please email immunisation@health.govt.nz