

2025-2026 Viral respiratory illness immunization campaigns to launch mid October

1. Seasonal Influenza Immunization Campaign: Influenza vaccination remains a critical component of protection against seasonal respiratory illness, particularly for children, seniors, and adults with underlying health conditions. Primary care partnership in this campaign to protect high-risk individuals is appreciated. All influenza vaccines available this season are trivalent; influenza B/Yamagata antigen has been removed as the virus has not been detected globally since March 2020. This season's vaccine has also been updated to include a new influenza A/H3N2 strain. Influenza vaccine inventory is expected to arrive late September and will be ready for distribution to primary care in early October. As usual, we ask that you please do not book appointments until you have vaccine available in your fridge.

Influenza vaccine is recommended and provided free for all BC residents ≥ 6 months of age. In particular, it should be offered to people at high risk of influenza complications (all children 6-59 months of age, adults 65 years of age and older, pregnant women, children and adults 5-64 years of age with underlying chronic health conditions, and Indigenous people 6 months and older), those capable of transmitting influenza to those at high risk (household contacts, health care workers, and visitors to health care facilities), and people who provide essential community services.

Publicly funded influenza vaccines available this season:				
Product	Fluzone®	Fluviral®	Flumist® ²	Fluad® Trivalent, Adjuvanted ³
Intended use ¹	≥ 6 months of age		2-17 years of age	≥ 65 years of age
Strains	- A/Victoria/4897/2022 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus - A/Croatia/10136RV/2023 (H3N2)-like virus (NEW strain this season) - B/Austria/1359417/2021-like virus (B/Victoria lineage)-like virus			

Notes:

¹Please do not miss an immunization opportunity: if Flumist® or Fluad® are not available, an age-appropriate alternate product can be offered.

²Flumist® is a live, attenuated vaccine, administered as intranasal spray; additional contraindications apply.

³Fluad® is an adjuvanted vaccine, recommended by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) to be offered to individuals 65 years of age and older, when available.

Reminder: People with severe egg allergy (including anaphylaxis) can be offered any influenza vaccine.

Timing: Influenza vaccine can be given at the same time as, or any interval from, COVID-19 vaccine or other vaccines.

Children <9 years of age receiving influenza vaccine for the first time should be offered two doses minimum 4 weeks apart.

Vaccine ordering and distribution: *If your office received influenza vaccine last year, you do not need to place an initial order.* Offices new to the influenza vaccination campaign can request vaccine by calling their [local public health unit](http://www.vch.ca/en/community-vaccine-provider-resources) (www.vch.ca/en/community-vaccine-provider-resources) or emailing cdcvaccines@vch.ca. Courier-based vaccine deliveries will be coordinated through the local Divisions of Family Practice for members in the Lower Mainland. Non-members can pay for this service; alternatively, all offices can also pick up vaccine from local health units. Offices will be able to re-order vaccine. Multi-group practices are asked to place orders for the entire group.

Reminder about booking vaccine appointments: Please immunize patients per your usual clinic procedures at routine visits or at influenza vaccine appointments *booked by your clinic*.

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

Vancouver Coastal Health Medical Health Officers

Chief Medical Health Officer: Dr. Patricia Daly | Regional Communicable Disease: Dr. Rohit Vijh
Vancouver: Dr. Althea Hayden, Dr. Mark Lysyshyn, Dr. Michael Schwandt, Dr. Brandon Yau 604.675.3900
Richmond: Dr. Meena Dawar 604.233.3150
North Shore: Dr. Ceinwen Pope 604.983.6700 | Coastal Rural: Dr. Moliehi Khaketla 604.984.5070
To receive these updates by email, please contact us at VCHPhysiciansUpdate@vch.ca

Physicians' and Nurse Practitioners' Update

[Month Day, YYYY]

From VCH Public Health

Your patients can also get immunized in the community. The provincial [Get Vaccinated system](http://www.getvaccinated.gov.bc.ca) (www.getvaccinated.gov.bc.ca) enables appointment booking for clinics offered through VCH public health (for young children) or pharmacies (ages 12 years and older).

2. Fall COVID-19 Immunization Campaign: Both mRNA COVID-19 vaccines Comirnaty® and Spikevax® have been updated to include the Omicron LP.8.1 variant strain and are expected to be available from mid-October to June. **The vaccine is recommended for the following:** residents of long-term care and assisted living facilities; people ≥ 65 years; people 6 months-64 years with underlying health issues, including compromised immune systems; pregnant people; all Indigenous people 6 months and older; and health care workers. Healthy adults and children can also get a dose if interested.

Co-administration of influenza and COVID-19 vaccines, if available, is acceptable. While your patients should receive influenza vaccine as soon as available, they should be advised that COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness begins to wane after 3-4 months and as the SARS CoV-2 virus is still circulating year-round, they may choose to be vaccinated based on personal needs to provide protection for future anticipated planned gatherings, travel etc. An interval of 3 months after COVID-19 infection or a previous booster dose is recommended.

If you are interested in offering COVID-19 vaccine to your patients, please email cdcvaccines@vch.ca to order the updated vaccine for your practice.

Update on RSV immunoprophylaxis and vaccines

RSV infection is responsible for severe illness in young children and individuals 65 years and older. Prevention products are available and recommended by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization.

RSV immunoprophylaxis for infants: The BC RSV Immunoprophylaxis program continues to offer prophylaxis using monoclonal antibody to children at high risk of RSV-related hospitalization, such as premature infants, children with chronic lung or congenital heart disease, or severe immunodeficiency <2 years of age. Program eligibility has been expanded to include young children (< 6 months of age during the RSV season) who live in remote communities including isolated Indigenous communities or congregate settings such as supportive housing. **Previous product, palivizumab, has been discontinued and replaced with nirsevimab, a long-acting monoclonal antibody that requires only one injection that can be offered between 1 September to 31 March.** Early administration in the season clearly offers maximum benefit. Further details on eligibility are available at the [PHSA's Shared Health Organizations Portal](https://shop.healthcarebc.ca) (shop.healthcarebc.ca). Eligible children identified at birth are referred directly by hospital neonatal intensive care units to this program. Pediatricians and primary care clinicians can also refer eligible children by completing the [2025-2026 RSV Program eligibility referral checklist](#) and emailing to RSVbooking@cw.bc.ca.

RSV vaccines: Infants can also be protected via **maternal immunization**. RSVpreF vaccine (Abrysvo®) is approved for use in pregnancy at 32-36 weeks gestation, prevents RSV-related hospitalizations in infants up to 6 months, and is available for private purchase. This vaccine is funded for First Nations individuals eligible for First Nations Health Authority health benefits. **Three RSV vaccines are now also available for older adults**, recommended by NACI for people ≥ 60 years who are residents of long-term care or other chronic care facilities, and all adults ≥ 75 years. Vaccine may be offered to adults 50-74 years based on individual consideration. These vaccines have high efficacy in reducing RSV related hospitalizations and are available for private purchase at [select pharmacies](#) (www.bcpharmacy.ca/rsv-vaccines) and VCH Travel Clinic (appointments available at travel.clinic@vch.ca or by calling 604-736-9244).

Avian influenza (H5N1) vaccine now available to those at risk of occupational exposure

Arepanrix™ H5N1 vaccine is now available to individuals working with H5N1 virus or potentially infected birds (e.g. veterinary staff performing necropsies, people involved in management of infected animals, or people working in close contact with wild birds or in/around waterfowl habitats). Vaccine is not recommended or available to the general public. Information on eligibility and locations carrying this vaccine is available at [Find an immunization clinic in VCH](http://www.vch.ca/en/service/find-immunization-clinic) (www.vch.ca/en/service/find-immunization-clinic).