

Flu FAQ for Health Professionals:

When are influenza vaccines distributed?

As you may be aware, there have been production issues with some of the manufacturers of the flu vaccine. Despite these manufacturing delays, Ontario has received its initial shipments of influenza vaccine, beginning in late September.

As in previous years, the distribution of the influenza vaccine from the provincial pharmacy in Ontario to public health units and other settings began at the beginning of October. Influenza vaccine is initially distributed for vaccination of seniors and individuals who are at high risk for flu complications and hospitalization (e.g., long-term care homes and hospitals) or at high risk for spreading the flu (e.g., health care workers). The flu vaccines then become available to the general population, which this year occurred at the end of October after Ontario's Minister of Health launched the 2019-2020 Universal Influenza Immunization Program (UIIP) campaign on October 30, 2019.

Health care providers and pharmacies are receiving influenza vaccines for both high risk and general populations now as the province continues to receive deliveries of the influenza vaccine. York Region Public Health distributes publicly-funded influenza vaccines to all health care providers in York Region except pharmacies, who receive influenza vaccines via Ministry-contracted third-party distributors.

Will there be more vaccine doses available this year?

For this flu season, the Ontario Ministry of Health is purchasing 4.78 million doses of publicly-funded influenza vaccine from multiple vaccine manufacturers for the province, a nearly 10 per cent increase from the original quantity purchased last season.

How many high-dose influenza vaccines will be available?

As a result of manufacturer/production issues there are delays in the delivery schedule of the high-dose vaccine to the province. To date, Ontario has received approximately 900,000 doses of the high-dose flu vaccine. The balance of the supply of the high-dose vaccine is not expected to be received by the province until late November/early December. To offset this, the Ministry of Health has purchased additional QIV doses.

Which vaccine is recommended for people over 65 years of age: the high-dose TIV or the standard-dose QIV?

This flu season, there are different flu vaccine options for people 65 years of age and older – a standard-dose quadrivalent vaccine that protects against four flu strains, and a high-dose trivalent vaccine that protects against three flu strains, in higher doses.

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization has stated no preferential recommendation between the high-dose flu vaccine and the standard quadrivalent vaccine offered.

The most important thing is for seniors to get the flu shot that is available in their location without delay – both vaccines are recommended for people 65 years and older.

Source: Ministry of Health, *Key messages for Universal Influenza Immunization Program*, 2019.