

Health Care Provider Qs & As: Influenza Immunization Information for Individuals 6 months to 64 years of age

This Qs & As sheet is intended for informational purposes only. It is not intended to provide medical or legal advice.

1. What publicly funded influenza vaccines are available for individuals 6 months to 64 years of age for Ontario's 2023/2024 Universal Influenza Immunization Program (UIIP)?

	Quadrivalent Inactivated Vaccines	
UIIP Abbreviation	QIV	
NACI Abbreviation	IIV4-SD	
Vaccine product	FluLaval Tetra	Fluzone® Quadrivalent
Manufacturer	GSK	Sanofi Pasteur
Age indication	≥6 months	≥6 months
Vaccine type	Egg-based	Egg-based
Micrograms of hemagglutinin	15 µg	15 µg
Dosage	0.5 mL	0.5 mL
Format	MDV	MDV and PFS
Route	IM	IM
Most common allergens¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egg protein² • Thimerosal³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egg protein² • Thimerosal³

MDV = Multi-dose vial PFS = Pre-filled syringe IM = Intramuscular injection

NACI = National Advisory Committee on Immunization

¹Any component in a vaccine may be a potential allergen. This table identifies the most common allergens.

²The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) indicates that egg allergy is not a contraindication for influenza vaccination and that egg-allergic individuals may be vaccinated against influenza using the full dose of any age-appropriate product. See section IV of the Canadian Immunization Guide chapter on Influenza and statement on seasonal influenza vaccine for 2018-2019 for studies supporting the NACI recommendation for egg-allergic individuals (www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/naci-ccni/#rec).

³Multi-dose vial format only.

Important notes:

- Fluzone[®] High-Dose Quadrivalent is another influenza vaccine available under the UIIP. It is a quadrivalent product authorized ONLY for those 65 years of age and older. Fluzone[®] Quadrivalent and Fluzone[®] High-Dose Quadrivalent are DIFFERENT products. Please use caution when administering Fluzone[®] products to ensure that the right vaccine is being administered to the right person.

2. How many doses of the influenza vaccine are needed to provide protection?

Age	Number of doses recommended
6 months to under 9 years of age – Not previously immunized with any influenza vaccine in their lifetime	2 doses at least 4 weeks apart*
6 months to under 9 years of age – Previously immunized with at least one dose of any influenza vaccine in their lifetime	1 dose
9 years of age and older	1 dose

*It is NOT necessary to use the same vaccine product for both doses.

3. How many strains do the influenza vaccines available for individuals 6 months to 64 years of age protect against?

All influenza vaccines available in Ontario for individuals 6 months to 64 years of age are QIV, which protect against four strains - two influenza A strains and two influenza B strains. More details on the specific strains included in this season's influenza vaccines are outlined in the Health Care Provider Qs & As: Information for the 2023/2024 Influenza Season document.

4. Who can administer the influenza vaccine?

Individuals who can administer the influenza vaccine include:

- Regulated health professionals who are authorized under the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* to administer vaccines.
 - Note: trained pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, pharmacy students and interns may only administer publicly funded influenza vaccine to individuals 2 years of age and older.
- Trained individuals under a delegation made in accordance with the requirements set by the regulatory College of the regulated health professional.

5. Can these QIV products cause influenza?

No. The publicly funded QIV products are all inactivated vaccines so individuals cannot get influenza from the vaccine.

6. Do any of the publicly funded influenza vaccines offer protection against COVID-19 or other diseases?

The influenza vaccine will not protect against respiratory viruses other than influenza, including the coronavirus that causes COVID-19, but will help prevent infection and illness from the influenza virus.

Protection against infection and illness from the influenza virus through influenza vaccination may provide added benefit in protecting against other diseases such as invasive Group A Streptococcal Disease (iGAS) or worsening of existing chronic illnesses such as cardiovascular disease.

7. Will the influenza vaccine increase risk of infection or severe outcomes related to COVID-19?

No. Expert groups and evidence indicate that getting the influenza vaccine will not increase your risk of COVID-19 infection or severe outcomes related to COVID-19.

8. Can the influenza vaccine be given at the same time as other vaccines?

Vaccine	Intervals (if applicable)
COVID-19 and other vaccines	The influenza QIV vaccines may be given at the same time with other vaccines, or at any time before or after other vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccine. If given by injection at the same time, separate limbs should be used if possible. Alternatively, the injections may be administered into the same muscle separated by at least 2.5 cm (1"). Different immunization equipment (needle and syringe) must be used for each vaccine.

9. Can the influenza vaccine be given to individuals when they are ill?

It is dependent on the severity of the symptoms. Those with a severe acute illness with or without fever should wait until the symptoms subside before being immunized. Individuals with symptoms of acute illness, including minor symptoms such as sore throat, should be recommended to complete the COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool (available at: [covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment](https://www.covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment)). If the individual screens negative using the Self-Assessment Tool, influenza immunization may be provided.

10. What are the common side effects from the influenza vaccine?

The most common side effects from the influenza vaccine are:

- Redness, swelling, and soreness at the injection site
- Headache
- Tiredness/weakness
- Fever

These side effects are generally mild and last only a few days.

11. Who should NOT get the influenza vaccine?

Anyone who has had a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to a previous dose of influenza vaccine or to any ingredient in the vaccine, except for egg, should NOT be vaccinated. According to NACI, egg-allergic individuals may be vaccinated against influenza using the full dose of any age-appropriate product, including QIV. See section IV of the Canadian Immunization Guide chapter on Influenza and statement on seasonal influenza vaccine for 2018-2019 for studies supporting the NACI recommendation for egg-allergic individuals (www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/naci-ccni/#rec).

Anyone who has developed Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) within six weeks of a previous influenza vaccination should generally NOT be vaccinated, HOWEVER, this should be weighed against the risks of not being vaccinated against influenza.

12. How long should the observation period be following influenza immunization?

NACI recommends a 15-minute post-vaccination observation period, as specified in the Canadian Immunization Guide (CIG). If there is a specific concern about possible vaccine allergy, 30 minutes is a safer interval.

The link to the CIG is available at: www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/canadian-immunization-guide-part-1-key-immunization-information/page-8-vaccine-administration-practices.html#p1c7a4

NACI previously allowed consideration for a reduced post-vaccination observation period, between 5 to 15 minutes for the administration of influenza vaccine during the pandemic, at times when appropriate physical distancing in post-vaccination waiting areas could not otherwise be maintained due to the volume of individuals seeking immunization and only when specific conditions were met:

- Past history of receipt of influenza vaccine and no known history of severe allergic reactions (including anaphylaxis) to any component of the influenza vaccine being considered for administration.
- No history of other immediate post-vaccination reactions (e.g., syncope with or without seizure) after receipt of any vaccines.

- The vaccine recipient is accompanied by a responsible adult who will act as a chaperone to monitor the vaccine recipient for a minimum of 15 minutes post-vaccination. In the case of two responsible adults, both can be vaccine recipients for the purposes of this criterion, if both agree to monitor the other post-vaccination.
- The vaccine recipient will not be operating a motorized vehicle or self-propelled or motorized wheeled transportation or machinery for a minimum of 15 minutes after vaccination.
- The vaccine recipient and the responsible adult chaperone are aware of when and how to seek post-vaccination advice and given instruction on what to do if assistance and medical services are required.
- The vaccine recipient and the responsible adult agree to remain in the post-vaccination waiting area for the post-vaccination observation period and to notify staff if the recipient feels or looks at all unwell before leaving. They should be informed that an individual exhibiting any symptom suggestive of an evolving adverse event following immunization (AEFI) at the end of the shortened post-observation period necessitates a longer period of observation in the clinic.

The link to the NACI guidance on reduced observation period is available at: www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/national-advisory-committee-on-immunization-naci/recommendations-duration-observation-period-post-influenza-vaccination-during-covid-19-pandemic.html

13. What information should be provided to individuals related to potential adverse events following immunization (AEFI) with the influenza vaccine?

The influenza vaccine, like any medicine, may cause adverse events, which in most cases are mild, lasting only a few days. Life-threatening allergic (anaphylactic) reactions are very rare. If they do occur, it is typically within a few minutes to a few hours after receiving the vaccine. Some studies have found a possible, but small, association between injectable influenza vaccine and Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) and others have not found any association. Oculorespiratory Syndrome (ORS) may occur in extremely rare instances. Please refer to question 20 of the Health Care Provider Qs & As: Information for the 2023/2024 Influenza Season sheet for further details.

As per s.38 of the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, those administering vaccines should ensure that the vaccine recipients or their parents/guardians are aware of the need to immediately report adverse events following immunization to their health care provider. Vaccine recipients should be advised to go to the nearest emergency department if severe reactions develop, including the following:

- Hives
- Swelling of the mouth or throat
- Trouble breathing, hoarseness or wheezing
- High fever (over 40°C or 104°F)
- Convulsions (seizures)
- Other serious reactions

Health care providers (e.g., physicians, nurses and pharmacists) are required by law (i.e., *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, s. 38) to report AEFIs to their local public health unit. Reports should be made using the Ontario AEFI Reporting Form (available at: www.publichealthontario.ca/vaccinesafety) and sent to the local public health unit.

A list of public health units is available at:

www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx.

14. Where can health care providers find more information about the UIIP?

Health care providers looking for more information about influenza, influenza vaccines, or the province's UIIP can refer to the Health Care Provider Qs & As: Information for the 2023/2024 Influenza Season sheet, Public Health Ontario (www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/influenza) or to their local public health unit.

A list of public health units is available at:

www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx.

15. Where can members of the public / patients get more information about influenza or any other vaccines?

Individuals looking for general information about influenza, influenza vaccines or the province's UIIP can call ServiceOntario, INFOLine at 1-866-532-3161 toll free in

Ontario (TTY#1-800-387-5559) or visit: www.ontario.ca/flu. Questions about the vaccine that are specific to an individual's medical condition should be discussed with a health care provider or local public health unit.

A list of public health units is available at:

www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx.

For additional information on influenza or the vaccine, please visit the following websites or call your local public health unit:

- a) Universal Influenza Immunization Program: www.ontario.ca/influenza
- b) Public Health Agency of Canada - National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) Statement on Seasonal Influenza Vaccine: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/naci-ccni/#rec
- c) Public Health Ontario: www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/influenza
- d) Immunize Canada: www.immunize.ca/
- e) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) - Seasonal Influenza: www.cdc.gov/flu/
- f) List of public health unit locations: www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx

Version française disponible en communiquant avec le 1-866-532-3161 ATS: 1-800 387-5559 (site web: www.health.gov.on.ca/fr/pro/programs/publichealth/flu/).