

Ministry of Health

Health Care Provider Qs & As: Information for Individuals ≥65 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 ≥65 years of age for Ontario's 2020/2021 Universal Influenza Immunization Program (UIIP)?

	Quadrivalent Inactivated Vaccine			High-Dose Trivalent Inactivated Vaccine
UIIP Abbreviation	QIV			High-dose TIV
NACI Abbreviation	IIV4-SD		IIV4-cc	IIV3-HD
Vaccine product	FluLaval Tetra	Fluzone® Quadrivalent	Flucelvax® Quad	Fluzone® High-Dose
Manufacturer	GSK	Sanofi Pasteur	Seqirus	Sanofi Pasteur
Vaccine type	Egg-based	Egg-based	Cell culture-based	Egg-based
Micrograms of hemagglutinin	15 µg	15 µg	15 µg	60 µg
Dosage	0.5 mL	0.5 mL	0.5 mL	0.5 mL
Format	Multidose vial	1. Multidose vial 2. Prefilled syringe	Prefilled syringe	Prefilled syringe
Route	Intramuscular injection	Intramuscular injection	Intramuscular injection	Intramuscular Injection
Age indication	≥6 months	≥6 months	≥9 years	≥65 years
Most common allergens[^]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egg protein* • Thimerosal 	1. Multidose vial <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egg protein* • Thimerosal 2. Prefilled syringe <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egg protein* 	Does NOT contain egg protein	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egg protein*

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

*The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) indicates that egg allergy is not a contraindication for influenza vaccination and that that egg-allergic individuals may be vaccinated against influenza using the full dose of any age-appropriate product.

Important notes:

- Fluzone® Quadrivalent and Fluzone® High-Dose are different products. Please use caution when administering Fluzone® products to ensure that the right vaccine is being administered to the right person.
- Fluzone® High-Dose is available through primary care providers (e.g. physicians and nurse practitioners), participating pharmacies and retirement homes, long-term care homes and hospitals.

2. What is the high-dose TIV and how is it different than the QIV?

The high-dose TIV contains three influenza strains (H3N2, H1N1 and one B strain). The vaccine contains a higher amount of antigen per strain than standard-dose influenza vaccine formulations. The high-dose TIV contains 60 µg of hemagglutinin (HA) protein for each of the three vaccine strains, compared to 15 µg of HA per strain in a standard dose QIV. Studies have shown that the higher antigen content improves the immune response and improves how well the vaccine works compared to standard dose TIV, which is important since older individuals may not respond as well to influenza vaccines compared to younger individuals.

Both the high-dose TIV and the standard dose QIV formulations available in the UIIP for 2020/2021 are inactivated influenza vaccines. The high-dose TIV contains only one strain of influenza B compared to the two influenza B strains contained in the QIV formulations.

To date no studies have directly compared high-dose TIV and standard dose QIV formulations.

3. What is the Flucelvax® Quad cell culture-based influenza vaccines?

Flucelvax® Quad is a mammalian cell culture-based QIV that is authorized for use in Canada in individuals 9 years of age and older.

- ‘Cell culture-based’ refers to how the influenza vaccine is made. The influenza viruses that are used in this vaccine are grown in cultured cells of mammalian origin instead of in hens’ eggs. All other inactivated influenza vaccines authorized for use in Canada are produced by growing influenza viruses in hens’ eggs.
- Cell culture-based vaccines have been authorized for use in other countries for a number of years.

Both egg-based and cell-culture based QIVs provide protection against four strains of influenza and are available in the UIIP for 2020/2021. Any of the available products can be used in the age group for which they are indicated.

4. Which influenza vaccine should individuals ≥65 years of age receive?

Do not delay vaccination to wait for a particular product. Both QIV and high-dose TIV protect against the flu, and the most important thing is for older adults to be vaccinated.

For individual-level decision making, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) in Canada states that when available, high-dose TIV should be used over standard-dose TIV, given the burden of influenza A(H3N2) disease and the good evidence of better protection compared to standard-dose TIV in adults 65 years of age and older.

Flu vaccine decision making should be discussed with a health care provider. In speaking with a health care provider, the following should be considered for your discussion:

- There is insufficient evidence to recommend the use of high-dose TIV over standard-dose QIV.
- However, given the increased burden of disease associated with influenza A(H3N2) in older adults, better protection against influenza A(H3N2) may be more important than better protection against influenza B, especially in those with multiple co-morbid conditions and compromised health status.

For more information on high-dose TIV and QIV formulations, please refer to the following:

- *Canadian Immunization Guide Chapter on Influenza and Statement on Seasonal Influenza Vaccine for 2020-2021* available at: www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/vaccines-immunization/canadian-immunization-guide-statement-seasonal-influenza-vaccine-2020-2021.html and;
- Public Health Ontario's *Influenza Vaccines for the 2020-2021 Influenza Season* available at: www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/influenza.

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

One dose of the influenza vaccine is needed to provide protection each year (each influenza season).

6. Who can administer the influenza vaccine?

Individuals who can administer the influenza vaccine include:

1. Regulated health professionals who are authorized under the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* to administer vaccines.
 - Note: trained pharmacists may only administer publicly funded influenza vaccine to individuals 5 years of age and older.

2. Trained individuals under a delegation made in accordance with the requirements set by the regulatory College of the regulated health professional.

7. Can the vaccine cause influenza?

No, both standard dose QIV and high-dose TIV are inactivated vaccines so individuals cannot get influenza from the vaccine.

8. Do any of the publicly funded influenza vaccines offer protection against COVID-19?

The influenza vaccine will not protect against coronaviruses and COVID-19, but will help prevent the flu.

9. Will the influenza vaccine increase risk of illness with COVID-19?

Getting the influenza vaccine will not increase your risk of illness with COVID-19.

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

Those with a severe acute illness with or without fever should wait until the symptoms subside before being immunized.

Unlike previous influenza seasons, during the COVID-19 pandemic individuals with symptoms of acute respiratory infection, including minor symptoms such as sore throat or runny nose, should defer influenza immunization until 10 days from the onset of symptoms or they have recovered, whichever is later, as they can pose an unnecessary risk to others and health care providers if they have COVID-19 when seeking influenza vaccination.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals with suspected, probable or confirmed COVID-19, and those who are close contacts of a case, should not attend influenza immunization appointments or clinics during their period of isolation as they may pose an unnecessary risk to the public and health care providers.

11. 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.

12. 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 the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI), egg-allergic individuals may be vaccinated against influenza using the full dose of any age-appropriate product, including QIV and high-dose TIV.

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 protected against influenza.

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, can 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 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 21 of the Health Care Provider Q & A: Information for the 2020/2021 Influenza Season sheet for further details.

As per the s.38 of the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, those administering vaccines should ensure that the vaccine recipients are aware of the need to 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 vaccine, or the province's UIIP can refer to the Health Care Provider Qs & As: Information for the 2020/2021 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. Who should individuals talk to if they have questions about influenza or any other vaccines?

Individuals looking for general information about influenza, the influenza vaccine 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/)