

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Nova Scotia Immunization Providers

**FROM:** Dr. Robert Strang, Chief Public Health Officer  
Department of Health Promotion and Protection

**DATE:** September 27, 2010

**RE:** **INFLUENZA VACCINATION PROGRAM FOR 2010-2011**

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Along with fall, the annual influenza immunization season is fast approaching. Your participation and cooperation in the past is greatly appreciated.

- **The provincial launch of the influenza immunization program will be October 14, 2010 and vaccine will start to be sent to providers after that day. Vaccine orders can be placed after Oct 4<sup>th</sup>, but vaccine will not be delivered until after Oct 14<sup>th</sup>. It is important to work with your local Public Health in relation to vaccine ordering and delivery.** Public Health receives weekly shipments of vaccine over a 6-8 week period and must distribute it equitably to all providers over that time period. Therefore, it is not possible to fill everyone's total order at the beginning of the season and you will not be able to order your whole season's supply at once. We ask you to plan your immunization clinics accordingly and we encourage you to first immunize people at greatest risk of influenza-related complications.

There is a strong likelihood that pH1N1 will be one of the main virus strains circulating during the 2010-2011 influenza season and possibility of younger than usual age groups being at high risk remains. **Therefore, for 2010/11 influenza vaccine is recommended and publicly funded for all Nova Scotians.** While all Nova Scotians are encouraged to be immunized, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization annual influenza immunization statement emphasizes that the traditional high risk groups remain the top priority for influenza immunization. These groups are:

- adults and children with chronic heart or lung disease, diabetes mellitus and other metabolic diseases, cancer, immunodeficiency, immunosuppression (due to underlying disease and/or therapy), renal disease, anemia, and hemoglobinopathy
- adults and children with any condition that can compromise respiratory function or the handling of respiratory secretions or that can increase the risk of aspiration
- children and adolescents (age 6 months to 18 years) with conditions treated for long periods with acetylsalicylic acid (e.g., rheumatoid arthritis patients)
- people of any age who are residents of long term or chronic care facilities
- all pregnant women
- all children from 6 to 23 months of age
- those 65 or older
- those who live or care for someone in the above groups

- health care workers [*includes all staff and volunteers in acute or long term care facilities, home care/home support agencies, community-based offices (including physicians, pharmacists, dentists and physiotherapists) or other community settings*] and students in a health care profession educational program
- first responders (EHS, fire and police)
- people living in a home that is expecting a newborn during the regular influenza season
- anyone who lives with, or cares for children less than 24 months of age.

For physicians, MSI billing services have modified the billing codes to reflect the fact that this year all Nova Scotians will be able to receive publicly funded (i.e. no cost to the patient) influenza vaccine. MSI data will be used to assess vaccine coverage by physicians. Other immunization providers are to complete aggregate data collection forms provided by Public Health.

In both their clinical practice, and as leaders in health care facilities and District Health Authorities, there are many opportunities for health care providers to promote and support annual influenza immunization, such as:

- ensuring that individuals (especially those at high risk) are advised about and/or offered influenza vaccine at every clinical encounter during the fall and early winter
- encouraging and supporting initiatives to provide influenza vaccine within health care facilities, such as at outpatient specialty clinics (e.g. diabetic daycare), as part of discharge planning for admitted patients and in emergency departments
- being a positive role model for other HCW by being immunized yourselves, encouraging co-workers to be immunized, providing factual information on influenza vaccine and ensuring HCW and patients are offered vaccine
- promoting and supporting the allocation of resources to implement comprehensive influenza immunization programs for both the public and HCW
- working with other partners to increase opportunities for the public to access influenza immunization

More information on influenza immunization can be found at:

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/cdpc/influenza.asp>  
[www.immunize.cpha.ca](http://www.immunize.cpha.ca)

Thank you for your continued support in promoting influenza vaccination.