FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ORDERING ADJUVANTED TRIVALENT FLU VACCINE FOR 2018-19

1. Which flu vaccine should I be ordering for those aged 65 years and over for 2018-19?

On 5 February NHS England stated that GP practices and community pharmacy providers should offer the **adjuvanted trivalent influenza vaccine** (aTIV) to all those aged 65 and over in 2018/19. This is the most effective vaccine currently available for this group. This is based on current Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advice on aTIV that was published in the Green Book in December 2017.

2. Which flu vaccine should I be ordering for those aged under 65 years for 2018-19?

In the letter of 5 February NHS England stated that GP practices and community pharmacy providers should offer adults aged under 65 in clinical at-risk groups the **quadrivalent influenza vaccine** (QIV) which protects against four strains of flu. This reflects updated Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advice on QIV that was published in the Green Book in October 2017.

3. Why is aTIV preferred to a quadrivalent vaccine for people aged 65 years and over?

In those people aged 65 and over aTIV has been shown to be more efficacious than non-adjuvanted vaccine. aTIV is therefore preferable to a non-adjuvanted QIV in this age group. There is currently no adjuvanted quadrivalent vaccine available for use in the UK. In other eligible populations aged under 65 the quadrivalent influenza vaccine has been shown to be more effective compared to the trivalent influenza vaccine; aTIV is not licensed for those aged under 65s.

4. When will adjuvanted trivalent flu vaccine (aTIV) be delivered?

Seqirus, the manufacturer of aTIV has confirmed that they can supply enough vaccine for the population aged 65 years and over in the UK. To meet the additional demand resulting from using the most effective vaccine, that is aTIV, the manufacturer has increased planned production and **extended the window for ordering to 12 April 2018.** Delivery to providers across the UK will be phased; 4 million doses will be available for delivery in September, 2 million doses by mid-October and 3 million doses in early November. GP Practices and pharmacies will need to order in line with an accurate forecast of the vaccines needed to cover the population aged 65 years and over to avoid wastage of vaccines by over-ordering. From May onwards, Seqirus will communicate to all customers more precise details around their expected volume by drop (month) to help GPs/Pharmacies to plan their clinics. The start of the influenza season varies each year – usually from December onwards. It is better to be vaccinated as early in the vaccine campaign as possible up to November, bearing in mind it takes two weeks to develop an immune response. In 2017-18 around 65% of those aged 65 years and over had taken up the offer of immunisation by mid-November, this rose to 72.6% by the end of January.

5. What is the proposed delivery schedule for adjuvanted trivalent flu vaccine aTIV in 2018?

The window for ordering has been extended to 12 April 2018. The manufacturer of aTIV has advised UK deliveries will be made during September, October and early November.

6. How do I plan my clinics when all the vaccine is not available in September?

Phased deliveries will require additional planning but will ensure that patients benefit from the most effective vaccines, in good time. We will aim to provide additional information once ordering is complete and further information on the delivery is available.

7. Would it be better to immunise with QIV instead of waiting for supplies of aTIV?

Given the clear evidence about the potential clinical benefits, aTIV is a more appropriate choice than QIV vaccine for older people and is the clear recommendation to GP practices and community pharmacy providers based on JCVI advice.

8. In what presentation will aTIV be supplied?

Due to the increased volume of aTIV to be produced, the manufacturer will, for the 2018/19 season only, deliver most of the supply in pre-filled syringes (Luer Lock) with a separate needle which will require attachment prior to administration of the vaccine. From the 2019/20 season onwards, aTIV will be supplied in the more usual presentation of a pre-filled syringe with an attached needle. The vaccine can be ordered in packs of 10 and there is a limited amount of single packs.

9. People who have their 65th birthday before 31st March 2019 will be eligible for influenza vaccine so may not be 65 when they are immunised, which vaccine should they have?

Public Health England in consultation with NHS England are of the opinion that it is appropriate to offer aTIV “off label” to those becoming 65 before 31st March 2019 and who are thus eligible to receive influenza vaccine under the current definition of the ‘over 65 ‘ group. Although aTIV is not licensed in those less than 65 years of age “off label" use is an option. The Public Health England (PHE) Patient Group Direction (PGD) for inactivated influenza vaccine for 2018/19 is likely to incorporate this off label indication. This will be confirmed later when the PGD has completed the authorisation process.

10. The letter of 5 February recommended QIV for ‘under 65s in clinical risk groups’, does this apply to other eligible groups such as unpaid carers?

Yes, other eligible groups such as unpaid carers (provided they are under 65 and therefore not also eligible for aTIV) should be offered QIV as they are likely to derive greater clinical benefit from this compared to TIV.

11. Which vaccines are being used for children in 2018-19?

Vaccines for all eligible children aged from 6 months to 17 years will be supplied centrally through the ImmForm website (Fluenz Tetra® and quadrivalent inactivated flu vaccines). As for previous seasons, GPs do not need to directly order any vaccines for this age group from manufacturers/suppliers. The licence has recently changed on two quadrivalent inactivated vaccines and they are now licensed from 6 months of age. Public Health England are currently undertaking the procurement process for quadrivalent inactivated vaccines for children in the 2018/19 season and details of the vaccines will be confirmed when this process has been completed.