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October 13, 2020

Re: Manitoba's 2020/21 Seasonal Influenza/Pneu-P-23 Immunization Program

Immunization against influenza (flu) is recommended for all Manitobans 6 months of age and older. Although influenza immunization is recommended every year, it is anticipated that COVID-19 and the flu will be co-circulating in the coming months. It is critical that those at increased risk of serious illness from the flu, their caregivers and close contacts be immunized against influenza to prevent influenza-like illness and its potential complications.

Consistent with previous years, Manitobans turning 65 years of age will be receiving a letter in early October 2020 advising them of their eligibility for the Pneu-P-23 vaccine. In past years, those turning 65 years who had previously received a Pneu-P-23 vaccine were excluded from the mail out. This year, **all Manitobans** turning 65 years of age will be getting a letter. Patients who have had a previous Pneu-P-23 dose before their 65th birthday (e.g., under high-risk eligibility) are eligible to receive a second dose, provided there is a 5 year minimum interval between Pneu-P-23 doses. Updated information on eligibility and minimum intervals can be found in a frequently asked questions and answers document for health care providers (released November 2019)

(<https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/factsheets/pneumofaq.pdf>).

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and physical distancing impact on influenza community clinics, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) reviewed the evidence around the recommended observation period post vaccination. NACI concluded that there was no evidence to support a decrease from the current 15 minute observation period and therefore, MHSAL recommends continuing this practice. Manitoba's *Seasonal Flu – Information for Health Professionals* website (www.gov.mb.ca/health/flu/pro.html) will link to this information pending NACI's public release of its statement.

Updated factsheets for the public are available for order free-of-charge. (Note: updated posters and other promotional materials will be available in the coming weeks; please continue to check: <https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/flu/resources.html> for these materials). Go to the *Seasonal Flu – Information for Health Professionals* website (www.gov.mb.ca/health/flu/pro.html) to access the information resources order form (to order factsheets and other materials) as well as the guidance documents for health care providers, specifically:

- NACI's *Guidance for Influenza Vaccine Delivery in the Presence of COVID-19*.

- The final *2020/21 Seasonal Influenza Immunization Program Plan*, which includes links to the updated product monographs.
- Questions and answers for health care providers on the high-dose inactivated influenza vaccine (Fluzone® High-Dose) that is being offered to the following eligible individuals 65 years of age and older, who are:
 - Residents of long-term care facilities (LTCF), including chronic care residents, OR
 - Residents of supportive and assisted living housing, OR
 - Clients in interim/transitional care beds, respite care clients as well as new, unimmunized residents admitted to a LTCF during the flu season, OR
 - In a provincial correctional facility, including those who are newly incarcerated or transferred from other federal or out of province correctional facilities, OR
 - Receiving homecare services while on a waiting list for admission into a LTCF, OR
 - Living on a First Nation or remote/isolated community, OR
 - Living north of the 53rd parallel of latitude.

Note: all administered doses of Fluzone® High-Dose must be recorded in the Manitoba Immunization Registry using **tariff code 8775**; all other publicly-funded, doses should be entered using tariff code 8791.

The province is starting to receive some of its seasonal influenza vaccine shipment. Please continue to monitor the *Seasonal Flu Vaccine Distribution and Supply* webpage at www.manitoba.ca/fludistribution for updates.

For more information on Manitoba's Seasonal Influenza Immunization Program, please visit www.Manitoba.ca/flu. If you have any questions regarding this communication, please email vaccines@gov.mb.ca.

Sincerely,

"Original signed by"

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