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November 4, 2020

Dear Assisted Living Director,

Influenza vaccination for staff and residents of assisted living facilities is of particular importance this flu season because of the COVID-19 pandemic- vaccination will help reduce the risk of respiratory illness overall, minimize burden in acute care during a pandemic, and prevent outbreaks within facilities.

Please stress the importance of influenza vaccination with all your staff and residents, as well as visitors to facilities.

Please see the Island Health website at <http://www.islandhealth.ca/flu> for information about the 2020-21 Seasonal Influenza Campaign. For assisted living specific information click on the “Long Term Care Facilities” button on the webpage.

This season the BC Centre for Disease Control recommends that individuals aged 65 years and older living in Assisted Living facilities (and long term care) receive Fluzone High-Dose influenza vaccine, which offers relatively better protection for individuals who are the most vulnerable to severe complications of influenza due to health conditions as well as living in a congregate setting which increases the risk of influenza outbreaks.

If your facility is planning to provide flu vaccine to residents in assisted living, please place your order for the high-dose vaccine as soon as possible and **begin vaccinating your residents and staff as soon as vaccine is available** at your facility.

If your facility brings in a pharmacist or other community immunizers to administer the vaccine in-house to residents in your assisted living facility, arrangements can be made with your local health unit for the immunizer to pick up vaccine on behalf of your facility. Please have your immunizer indicate on the order form that they are requesting vaccine specifically for your facility.

If you do not normally provide influenza vaccination to the residents in-house, we encourage you to reach out to your local community immunizers such as pharmacists and physicians who may be able to administer the vaccine to the residents.

Island Health has received a limited number of doses of the Fluzone High-Dose product. The publicly-funded Fluzone High-Dose is available for individuals aged 65 years of age and older living in assisted living and long-term care facilities. If stock of Fluzone High-Dose is no longer available, it is acceptable to provide another recommended influenza vaccine for this population. Note that public health community clinics usually will not have Fluzone High-Dose available because of the limited supply.

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Other senior residents in independent living or living in the community are eligible for Fluvad and other influenza vaccines. There may be some Fluzone High-Dose vaccine available for private purchase through some pharmacies and/or travel clinics.

Information for facilities and providers who will be immunizing in assisted living facilities:

All vaccine order forms, reporting forms and vaccine information is available online at [Influenza Information & Forms for Long-Term Care Facilities](#). Additional information about influenza outbreak preparation and management will be available online and sent directly to you by Island Health. All COVID-19 protocols and prevention measures should remain in place, as these measures will also reduce the risk of influenza within facilities.

All unused vaccines must be returned to your health unit once immunization clinics are completed. Vaccine must be kept under cold-chain conditions from the time it is picked up until it is returned to the health unit. Follow guidelines in Appendix E: [Management of Biologicals](#) in the BCCDC Immunization Manual.

For more information influenza vaccine products available this flu season please see [Intended Use of Influenza Vaccines](#).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dee Hoyano', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dee Hoyano, MD, FRCPC
Medical Health Officer