

Planning and managing influenza vaccination during the COVID-19 pandemic

ACT Health is issuing guidance to assist healthcare professionals with planning and managing influenza vaccination services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Immunisation providers are encouraged to implement enhanced infection control measures to ensure they can safely provide influenza vaccination services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Importance of providing influenza vaccination services

- In 2020, the influenza season in the ACT will coincide with the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Influenza is a vaccine-preventable disease.
- Influenza vaccination is recommended for everyone aged 6 months and older
- In the ACT, influenza vaccine is free for people at higher risk of complications, including:
 - children aged 6 months to under 5 years
 - pregnant women
 - people aged 65 years and older
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 6 months and older
 - people aged 6 months and older with underlying medical conditions
- It is very important that we achieve high influenza vaccination coverage rates in the ACT in 2020 to protect the community and avoid placing additional burden on the healthcare system from influenza during a time where the system is under increased demand due to COVID-19.

Recommendations for managing patients before they attend the clinic

- Designate specific times throughout the week for influenza vaccination clinics to ensure that only well patients are in the clinic during those times.
- Send reminders to eligible patients that they can now receive their influenza vaccine.
- Advise the patient or their guardian/carer that only one additional person can attend the clinic at the time of vaccination.
- Advise the patient or the guardian/carer that they must not attend for their vaccination if they have any symptoms of a respiratory infection, including fever, sore throat, runny nose, cough or shortness of breath.
- Ask patients not to arrive in advance of their scheduled vaccination to minimise the number of people that are in the clinic.

Recommendations for managing patients when they arrive for their influenza vaccination

- Make a staff member available to manage social distancing (1.5m) for people attending the clinic. Options may include:
 - an appointment system for all vaccinations;
 - patients waiting outside (if safe to do so) or in their cars before vaccination; and
 - phoning patients when it's time to come into the clinic

- Arrange a process and a checklist to assess each patient as they arrive for their influenza vaccination prior to entering the practice. This could include keeping doors locked and asking patients to call once they are outside.
- Signage should be displayed at the entrances of all clinics offering influenza vaccination to inform patients and their guardian/carer of the following:
 - The clinic is taking additional measures to protect the community during the ongoing COVID-19 response.
 - You must follow these instructions to ensure we are all protected.
 - Only one parent/guardian or carer can accompany the person who will be vaccinated.
 - People must not enter the premises if they have symptoms of a respiratory infection (such as fever, sore throat, runny nose, shortness of breath or cough).
 - People must not enter the premises if they have been told to self-isolate after returning from overseas or after being in contact with a person who has confirmed COVID-19.
 - Use alcohol hand sanitiser provided at the entrance to the reception or waiting area.
- Also consider translating signage and messaging into other key community languages.

Infection control measures within the premises

- Remind staff that if they are unwell, they must not attend work.
- Make alcohol hand sanitiser or hand washing facilities available at the entrance to your practice/clinic area and ensure patients use these on entry and when leaving.
- Ensure administration, clinical and patient areas are wiped down frequently with detergent and disinfectant wipe/solution (according to normal infection prevention and control practice).
- Ensure there is a process to keep well patients separated from unwell patients, particularly those who are suspected cases of COVID-19.
- Minimise patient movement through the clinic as much as possible.
- Ensure that seating and standing queuing areas meet the current recommendations of social distancing. If standing, mark each standing position with an 'X'. If seated, chairs must be spaced appropriately to maintain social distancing and cleaned between use.
- Always sit clients 1.5 metres from administration staff desk on check in and 1.5 metres from other clients.
- Consider the size of the clinic area and apply the principles of social distancing (1 person per 4 square metres) to determine the number of patients that can attend the clinic at any one time.
- Remove all toys and magazines from your waiting room.
- Use alternative entrance/exit (where available) to avoid foot traffic in the administration area.

Vaccination procedures

- Minimise physical contact with client record document.
- Use a single-use pre-immunisation checklist for each client rather than a laminated re-useable version. Consider displaying a large pre-vaccination checklist in the queuing area.
- Ensure there is no more than one carer/guardian with the patient who is being vaccinated (unless there are extenuating circumstances).

- Consider a separate room for clients to wait post vaccination dependant on numbers at each session, ensuring social distancing between clients.
- There are no additional PPE requirements for your routine immunisation service. Standard and transmission-based precautions should be utilised as appropriate.
- Ensure that hand hygiene is performed between each patient.
- Use a separate pen supply for patients to sign consent forms, cleaning appropriately between use.

Alternate vaccination clinic models can be considered

- Alternate locations for vaccination clinics may also be considered if practicable, such as a practice car park or other outdoor area.
- Conducting vaccination clinics in an alternate location could also include combining and sharing resources and staff with other practices in your local area.
- Consider offering home vaccination for vulnerable people.
- Points to consider for alternate models include:
 - Social distancing and enhanced infection control requirements.
 - Patient and staff safety and comfort e.g. consideration of the weather and nearby traffic.
 - Requirements to maintain confidentiality and undertake pre-vaccination assessments.
 - Appropriate cold chain management.
 - Pre-vaccination waiting and post vaccination observation areas that provide social distancing.
 - Facilities/area to manage adverse events.
 - Maintaining vaccination records.
 - Bathroom and break facilities for staff.
 - Messaging to patients.

Where to go for more information

- ACT Health Winter Wellbeing and Flu: <https://www.health.act.gov.au/about-our-health-system/population-health/winter-wellbeing-and-flu>
- COVID-19 related information:
<https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/>
<https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/novel-coronavirus>

Accessibility

If you have difficulty reading a standard printed document and would like an alternative format, please phone 13 22 81.



If English is not your first language and you need the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), please call 13 14 50.

For further accessibility information, visit: www.health.act.gov.au/accessibility

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