

News Release - Manitoba

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MANITOBA GOVERNMENT TO MAKE HIGH-DOSE SEASONAL FLU VACCINE AVAILABLE TO MORE MANITOBANS THIS FALL

Expanded Eligibility to Include Everyone Aged 65 and Older: Gordon, Johnston

The Manitoba government will expand eligibility for the high-dose influenza vaccine this fall to include all adults aged 65 years and older to ensure more Manitobans are protected from severe illness, Health Minister Audrey Gordon and Seniors and Long-term Care Minister Scott Johnston announced today. “We continue to make decisions about Manitoba’s vaccination efforts based on the guidance of our public health experts,” said Gordon. “Planning is already well underway for this fall’s seasonal flu campaign and this is an important change that will protect more older adults. I am pleased to announce this investment to expand eligibility for the high-dose flu vaccine to protect those who are most at risk, which in turn protects all Manitobans.”

Manitoba Health currently offers the high-dose inactivated influenza vaccine (fluzone high-dose) to individuals aged 65 and older who meet specific eligibility requirements, such as residing in long-term care facilities or assisted living housing. Beginning this fall, the high-dose vaccine will be available to all people aged 65 and older, without any other eligibility requirements.

“Older adults have a higher risk of flu complications, so protecting seniors is especially important,” said Johnston. “That is why our government is taking additional proactive steps to protect seniors by expanding eligibility for the high-dose influenza vaccine and making it easier to qualify.”

This change aligns with recommendations from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization to use the high-dose influenza vaccine for adults aged 65 and older when available.

“There is good evidence the high-dose influenza vaccine provides better protection for older adults compared to the standard dose influenza vaccine,” said Dr. Brent Roussin, chief provincial public health officer. “Expanding eligibility will support improved outcomes in this age group, and reduce illness, hospitalization and post-influenza death.”

In 2017, Manitoba became the first province to offer a high-dose version of the influenza vaccine and many provinces have followed suit.

The ministers noted the province is working with health-care providers, pharmacists and others who administer the vaccine to have it in place and ready for the fall vaccine campaign, which usually launches in October. The high-dose and standard flu vaccines are available to all eligible people in Manitoba at no cost. The province is expecting to invest about \$3.6 million to support the expanded

eligibility for the high-dose vaccine to allow for increased uptake of this higher-cost vaccine, the ministers added.

Additional information about the launch of the seasonal flu campaign will be available in the coming months, the ministers noted.

Manitobans are reminded it is important for everyone to get the annual seasonal flu vaccine, whether it is a standard or high-dose vaccine. Last year, more than 400,000 doses of flu vaccine were given to people in Manitoba or about 29 per cent of the eligible population.

More information about seasonal flu is available at www.gov.mb.ca/health/flu/.