

Dear Members,

As the flu vaccination programme commences this autumn, for the first time children aged between two and twelve years will also be able to access the vaccine without charge. We understand that implementation of this programme will be hugely challenging to our GPs, in a potentially stressful winter period for healthcare professionals and patients.

In light of the current pandemic and public health guidelines relating to social distancing, we have received many calls from our members relating to the administration of the flu vaccination, whether done on a drive-through or off-site basis.

We have sought clarification from our underwriters; Allianz and MedPro, in respect of cover in these circumstances and have set out general advices for members below.

Indemnity for offsite vaccines

From a professional indemnity perspective, Medisec's underwriters; Allianz and MedPro, have confirmed that there is no issue with the administration of the flu vaccinations, whether done on a drive-through or off-site basis, subject to the terms and conditions of the policies. GPs will have to ensure sufficient protocols are in place and followed at all times. The same indemnity standards and principles apply to GPs and practice nurses administering vaccinations off-site as if they were administered in the surgery.

However, it is very important for GP practices to liaise with their employer's liability and public liability insurers, as they may have to take out/extend separate insurance to provide indemnity to the owners of the off-site premises. Also, the movement of any equipment to the off-site premises would need to be addressed by the GP practice public liability policy insurer.

Risk issues

In order to ensure GPs and practice nurses are adequately trained to administer the vaccines, e-learning modules are available on HSE and ICGP websites and GPs should familiarise themselves with these modules together with public health and HSE guidance and any guidelines issued by the National Immunisation Advisory Committee.

The following issues should be kept in mind when making arrangements for drive-through/off-site vaccinations:

- Be aware of all up-to-date protocols and clinical guidelines in relation to the vaccines. It may be helpful to draw up a specific protocol for vaccine administration 'off-site';
- GPs should review the protocols with any nurse who may be administering the vaccine in advance and record having done so and ensure that the nurse is aware of relevant clinical guidelines and responsibilities;
- Ensure all staff members are properly trained and are aware of their roles and responsibilities;
- If a vaccine session is going to be carried out 'off-site', ensure correct transport and storage of vaccines, ie, vaccines are transported in an appropriate validated cool box (with minimum and maximum thermometer, in order to maintain the 'cold chain' and in accordance with clinical guidelines;
- Be aware of shelf-life of vaccines (the shelf life of the nasal attenuated vaccine is short) and check dates on each vaccine before administering;
- Ensure where possible that patients' records can be accessed and ensure records are updated accordingly;

- Record batch number, expiry date and site of vaccination (if appropriate) in the patient's record. If 'off-site', and patient records are not available, keep a note for each patient and enter into the record on return to the practice;
- Ensure that all sharps are disposed of correctly and transported appropriately, (in particular when vaccinations are undertaken off-site) in line with local guidelines;
- Insofar as possible, ensure the facilities are set up to protect patients' privacy and dignity;
- Ensure adequate time is allocated to take informed consent from patients, and record consent accordingly;
- If a decision not to vaccinate is reached, reasons should be recorded and a plan for following up with the patient should be made, where appropriate;
- If you are vaccinating other GPs' patients, keep a record of the vaccination and notify the patient's regular GP to ensure continuity of care;
- Have sufficient documentation (patient information leaflets) available for patients, or if available electronically, ensure patient is aware how to access documents, and note this in records;
- Ensure appropriate treatment areas are available for patients who become unwell / faint;
- Ensure that emergency equipment and medication, in date, is taken to the 'off-site' venue, in the event that a patient suffers an anaphylactic shock or fall;
- In case of anaphylactic shock or falls, ensure competent and skilled staff members are available to provide the necessary care;
- Ensure that patients are requested to stay in the vicinity for 15 minutes after administration of the vaccine. As guidelines are evolving, particularly with regard to children, you should keep up to date with ICGP/HSE/NIAC guidance in this regard.
- Having regard to the clinical guidelines, ensure appropriate PPE is available for staff members and patients;
- Make use of posters and signage to communicate infection control measures to patients such as wearing masks, spacing between seating areas, one-way system etc.;
- Have a critical incident management policy in place to ensure all incidents are recorded and investigated appropriately, and any necessary actions taken to prevent future incidents;
- GPs should continue to keep abreast of and follow public health and HSE guidance and any guidelines issued by the National Immunisation Advisory Committee.

The Medisec team would like to acknowledge the tremendous work that you are all doing in this extremely challenging environment. We remind you to look after yourself and your loved ones and remember that we are here to look after you.

Best wishes from the Medisec team,



Get in touch

Call us on:

1800 460 400 or +353 1 6610504

Email us:

General info@medisec.ie

CEO ruthshipsey@medisec.ie

Opening hours:

Office opening hours 8am -5.30pm
Monday – Thursday; 8am -5pm Friday
for all your advisory, membership,
ethical or medico- legal queries.

