

Influvac Tetra (Saison 2019/2020) influenza vaccine approved for limited use in New Zealand

Influenza.
Don't get it.
Don't give it.

To offer protection to non-funded patients still wanting to be immunised against influenza this winter, 360,000 doses of a vaccine made for the 2019/2020 Northern Hemisphere flu season is now available to order and will be distributed from 25 May 2020.

This vaccine, Influvac Tetra (Saison 2019/2020), is not indicated for use with funded patients.

Please reserve sufficient stocks of Afluria Quad (the current Southern Hemisphere vaccine) for your remaining funded patients. For your non-funded patients, please use the new Northern Hemisphere vaccine Influvac Tetra (Saison 2019/2020).

About the Northern Hemisphere Influvac Tetra (Saison 2019/2020) vaccine

Influvac Tetra (Saison 2019/2020) is indicated for use in adults and children aged 3 years and older who are not at increased risk of serious illness from influenza, ie. people who are not eligible to receive funded influenza vaccine.

We expect Influvac Tetra (Saison 2019/2020) to offer good protection against influenza for people who are healthy and well, particularly for the strains of influenza currently circulating. See over the page: **Information about influenza strains.**

PACKAGING

The packaging on Influvac Tetra (Saison 2019/2020) is in German so information in English will be included in every order. It is also available online at influenza.org.nz

EXPIRY DATE

The expiry date of 30 June 2020 is the standard date printed on all Northern Hemisphere vaccines to coincide with the end of their influenza season. As the vaccines being supplied to New Zealand were manufactured in September 2019 and have a 12-month shelf life, they continue to be safe to use until 31 August 2020 according to our technical advice.

For more information about this vaccine, including the shelf life and storage conditions, please refer to the New Zealand data sheet. This will be published on the Medsafe website.

Using the right vaccine

FUNDED PATIENTS

Because Influvac Tetra (Saison 2019/2020) may offer less protection for one strain than Afluria Quad, you must **continue vaccinating your eligible patients with Afluria Quad vaccine only.**

Eligible patients include people aged 65 and over, pregnant women, and people with health conditions as set out in the Pharmaceutical Schedule, which you can view here. This does not include frontline workers or other essential workers during COVID-19 alert levels three and four (like teachers and supermarket workers) who were given priority access to vaccine.

NON-FUNDED PATIENTS

The Northern Hemisphere vaccine Influvac Tetra (Saison 2019/2020) is recommended for your non-funded patients.

BABIES AND TODDLERS

You must continue to use Afluria Quad Junior to vaccinate eligible babies over 6 months and toddlers under 3 years.

Reassuring your patients

You may need to reassure people receiving the new vaccine that it will provide good protection for three of the four influenza strains likely to be prevalent in New Zealand this year. Also, these three strains are the ones currently in circulation.

They are also likely to be reassured to know there are low levels of influenza in New Zealand so far this year, and the current travel restrictions and rules around social distancing are likely to continue to reduce the transmission of illness.

When unfunded patients have the Northern Hemisphere vaccine, it not only protects them - it means we can reserve the 2020 Southern Hemisphere influenza vaccine for those most vulnerable to the complications of influenza. This approach improves protection against influenza across the whole community in New Zealand this winter.

Information about influenza strains

The Institute of Environmental Science and Research (ESR) presented data to the Ministry of Health's Immunisation Technical Advisory Group on the strains in the 2019/20 Northern Hemisphere vaccine.

ESR noted two of the Northern Hemisphere's influenza strains (A/H1N1 and B/Phuket) match the current Southern Hemisphere's strain. A third strain, B/Colorado, is a close relative of B/Washington strain and so likely to provide reasonable protection. While the fourth strain (A/H3N2) is not a good match against the expected Southern Hemisphere strains, it may still offer some residual protection. However, this strain is not currently the predominant strain circulating in New Zealand.

While the influenza strains currently circulating in New Zealand are covered by the Northern Hemisphere vaccine, we can't predict if this will change during the flu season. This means the 2020 New Zealand season vaccine is still recommended for those most at risk of serious illness from influenza.

Northern Hemisphere strain	Southern Hemisphere strain	Comparison
A/H1N1	A/H1N1	Exact match - equal protection
B/Phuket	B/Phuket	Exact match - equal protection
B/Washington	B/Colorado	Close match - some protection
A/Kansas/H3N2	A/South Australia/H3N2	Not a match - unlikely protection

Unused Afluria Quad vaccine

If you have extra Afluria Quad vaccines in stock beyond what you need for your funded patients, please work with your immunisation coordinators to make sure that the most vulnerable people in your communities are protected, as other providers may have funded patients waiting.

Demand for influenza vaccine

The Ministry of Health is pleased to see record numbers of people seeking to be immunised this year. We realise this has placed extra demand on our providers while you're already managing the challenges of preparing for and responding to COVID-19. We would like to thank you for prioritising our vulnerable groups, and your patience as we manage the supply responsibly and equitably.