
TO: All Public Health Staff

FROM Dr. Paul Van Buynder, VP Public Health and Chief Medical Health Officer

SUBJECT: Update on Influenza Control Policy

Date: December 5, 2013

I am pleased to advise that at this point in the campaign we have 80% of regular staff vaccinated and 75% of all staff currently protected against Influenza infection.

I have had a number of queries with regard to suitability to receive vaccine and I write to clarify these issues.

Pregnancy

Some pregnant staff in Fraser Health were advised by practitioners not to be vaccinated and are thus facing many months of mask wearing. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization strongly recommends vaccine for all pregnant women and recently The World Health Organization made vaccinating pregnant women against influenza the number one priority of influenza control programs, above even the elderly and other high risk groups.

Influenza infection in pregnancy leads to many more consequences for not just the mother but also the unborn child. Additionally, if the mother has a vaccine in pregnancy it subsequently protects the newborn baby against influenza for the first six months of life when they are too young to receive vaccine themselves.

Please email me if you need further information but for your benefit and that of your unborn child, we recommend all pregnant women receive Influenza vaccine.

Contraindications to Vaccine

There are very few contraindications to receiving the influenza vaccine. Some staff have had questions about egg allergy; this is not a contraindication to influenza vaccine.

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Many staff have been advised, because of a previous reaction, not to have another Influenza vaccine. Last year, and again this year, many staff were successfully vaccinated under controlled conditions in the Emergency departments. This process has allowed staff to be safely immunized when they were previously told to avoid vaccine.

There is a mechanism in Fraser for a Physician, in the Medical Health Officer group, to review individual situations to see whether you can be safely vaccinated and avoid the need to wear a mask. If you fall into this category and are interested in having a review of your personal situation, please email me.

Compliance with the Directive

I have received a number of complaints from staff saying that they were vaccinated because of the policy despite preferring not to have vaccine. These staff have been concerned that some unvaccinated staff are not wearing masks and thus avoided having the vaccine without any consequences.

Managers are diligently monitoring the situation at the local level and as it becomes apparent that individuals are not following the directive, steps are taken to counsel staff appropriately. I recognize the valid concern that some of you have and want to reassure you we recognize that noncompliance poses a challenge to the integrity of the policy and will work to ensure that the situation does not continue when we are aware of this occurring.

Sincerely,



Paul Van Buynder, MBBS, MPH, FAFPHM
VP Public Health, Chief Medical Health Officer