

Q&A for health care workers – Influenza vaccine recommendations for children with Neurologic and Neurodevelopmental Conditions (NNC) October 2015

1. [Have any groups been added by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization \(NACI\) to those at high risk of influenza-related complications for the 2015-6 influenza season?](#)
2. [Is BC adopting this change to include this group of children with NNC for publicly-funded influenza vaccine in 2015/16?](#)
3. [Why has BC not adopted NACI's recommendation and included eligibility of all children with NNC for publicly-funded influenza vaccine?](#)
4. [What advice should I provide to parents of children who question whether their child should be immunized under the new NACI recommendations, but do not fall into an existing eligible group in the BC guidelines?](#)

1. Have any groups been added by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) to those at high risk of influenza-related complications for the 2015-6 influenza season?

Yes, there was one new addition. Children with neurologic and neurodevelopmental conditions (including seizure disorders, febrile seizures and isolated developmental delay) have been added to the list of conditions at high risk of influenza-related complications or hospitalization for whom vaccine is particularly recommended. NACI made this decision based on a recent publication by the Canadian Immunization Monitoring Program Active (IMPACT), which concluded that the burden of influenza infection in hospitalized children with neurological and neurodevelopmental conditions, is significant. To read the NACI statement, see [NACI's Statement on Seasonal Influenza Vaccine for 2015-2016](#); to review the study abstract, see <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24918745>

2. Is BC adopting this change to include this group of children with NNC for publicly-funded influenza vaccine in 2015/16?

No. In 2015/16, eligibility for publicly funded influenza vaccine in BC is unchanged. Those eligible include all children aged 6 months to less than 5 years, children with conditions that compromise the management of respiratory secretions and are associated with an increased risk of aspiration (e.g., cognitive dysfunction, spinal cord injury, seizure disorder, and neuromuscular disorders), and

many other chronic health conditions. Many children will also be eligible for publicly funded vaccine if they have a high risk household contact, including if they have a sibling under 5 years old, or if they plan to visit a health care facility. See [Section VII of the Communicable Disease Control Immunization Program Manual](#) for a complete list of high risk groups, eligible for publicly-funded 2015/15 seasonal influenza vaccines.

3. Why has BC not adopted NACI's recommendation and included eligibility of all children with NNC for publicly-funded influenza vaccine?

Based on the methods used in the IMPACT study, it cannot be established whether there is a higher risk of influenza related hospitalization in these children. The study does not assess whether there would be an incremental benefit through addition of such children in provinces without universal programs but with already broad eligibility for influenza vaccine, such as BC. Additionally, NNC, as stated in the NACI recommendations, is a poorly defined condition, encompassing a broad spectrum of both physical and learning disabilities. This lack of clarity would make it difficult to implement this recommendation, and the conditions -would need to be better defined to allow identification of such children.

4. What advice should I provide to parents of children who question whether their child should be immunized under the new NACI recommendations, but do not fall into an existing eligible group in the BC guidelines?

Check the eligibility criteria in [Section VII of the Communicable Disease Control Immunization Program Manual](#) to determine if the child falls into one of the other categories for which the influenza vaccine is recommended and provided for free. If the child is not eligible for a free influenza vaccine, parents can purchase it at select pharmacies and travel clinics.

REFERENCES:

National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI). An Advisory Committee Statement (ACS). Statement on Seasonal Influenza Vaccine for 2015-2016 [Internet]. Ottawa: Public Health Agency of Canada; 2015. Available from <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/naci-ccni/index-eng.php>