

Policy and Procedures Manual

Formal Submission for Approval

RESPIRATORY ILLNESS (COVID-19 AND INFLUENZA) IMMUNIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

Health PEI Policy – Human Resources		POLICY & PROCEDURES
Applies To:	All Health PEI HCW's	
Monitoring:	Chief Human Resources Officer	
Date:	Effective: September 26, 2023 Next Review: September 26, 2026	

Approving Authority: _____ Executive Leadership Team

Authorized Signature: _____

Record of Decision

Approving Body: Executive Leadership Team
Meeting Date:

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<p>This is a CONTROLLED document. Any copies of this document appearing in paper form should always be checked against the electronic version prior to use.</p>		

1.0 POLICY

- 1.1 Health PEI is committed to maintaining a safe work environment and to protecting its healthcare workers (HCW's), patients, clients, residents, and members of the public from the risk of infection from, and complications associated with respiratory illnesses, specifically; the SARS CoV-2 virus, the cause of COVID-19, and influenza.
- 1.2 Vaccination and personal protective equipment (PPE) program requirements are recognized as a cornerstone for preventing or decreasing the severity of influenza and COVID-19 for those at high risk of serious illness or death from infection and related complications.
- 1.3 The most effective strategy for preventing COVID-19 and influenza is by way of vaccination. Masks can also serve as a method of source control from infected HCW's who may be asymptomatic. Masks may also protect unvaccinated HCW's from asymptomatic patients or visitors. Other important infection control measures that help to prevent transmission, include:
 - (a) Droplet/contact precautions (airborne precautions when completing aerosol generating procedures for suspected/confirmed COVID-19 cases);
 - (b) Hand hygiene;
 - (c) Cleaning of patient care equipment and the surrounding environment; and
 - (d) Staying home when ill.
- 1.4 Health PEI and HCW's have a duty to actively promote, implement and comply with COVID-19 and influenza immunization and PPE to decrease the risk of infection for staff, patients, residents, clients, and members of the public. Vaccination is not mandatory for current Health PEI HCW's, Health PEI strongly encourages compliance with the [National Advisory Committee on Immunization's \(NACI\)](#) position regarding fulfillment of the recommended vaccine series for COVID-19 and influenza.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

Appropriate Liaison	For HCW's, the appropriate liaison is their respective Employee Health Nurse or Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness team member , and/or Medical Affairs. For volunteers, the appropriate liaison is Volunteer Resources as per their respective facility. For students, the appropriate liaison is their respective educational institution. For contractors and businesses/entities operating at hospital sites, it is their primary employer.
Droplet/Contact Precautions:	Initiated by HCW's to prevent the transmission of infection when caring for a patient with COVID-19 or influenza-like illness (ILI), and when there is a risk of contamination of blood or body fluids. Includes: private room or spatial separation of greater than two meters; mask/facial protection when within two meters of a patient; gown; and gloves.
HCW:	All persons involved in providing care and/or services within Health PEI facilities and programs, which includes all employees (casual, permanent, temporary, full-time and part-time employees), physicians (salaried, fee-for-service, contract and locum), students, volunteers and contract workers.
Immunization:	A process by which a person becomes protected against a disease through vaccination. This term is often used interchangeably with vaccination or inoculation.
Immunizer:	A health professional eligible to administer the influenza and COVID-19 vaccines under this policy and includes pharmacists, nurses, nurse practitioners and physicians.
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):	Personal protective equipment (PPE) are items worn to provide a barrier to help prevent potential exposure to infectious disease. These items include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Gloves – Gowns – Surgical masks – Fit tested respirators (N95 masks, half-face respirator) – Eye protection (goggles, face shield, mask with visor)
Respiratory Illness:	Respiratory illnesses are categorized by the impact to the airways and the lungs that affect human respiration, caused by organisms such as viruses or bacteria that affect the respiratory system. SARS CoV-2 virus, the cause of COVID-19, and influenza are the two respiratory illnesses covered under this policy. Respiratory illnesses are expressed as fever greater than (38.5c)* AND cough and/or sore throat (in the absence of a known cause). Signs and symptoms of respiratory illness include; fever* or feeling feverish/chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headache, and fatigue. * <i>It is important to note that not everyone with influenza or COVID-19 will have a fever.</i>
Respiratory Illness Season:	Generally occurs during the fall, winter and early spring. Health PEI will determine and announce when respiratory illness seasons begins and ends to indicate policy activation and deactivation.

Universal Masking:	Refers to wearing a mask at all times. Medical masks are worn as source control to protect others or as personal protective equipment to the wearer. Universal masking is one of many control measures put in place to prevent the spread of infection.
Vaccine:	A substance used to stimulate the production of antibodies and provide immunity against one or several diseases, prepared from the causative agent of a disease, its products, or a synthetic substitute, treated to act as an antigen without inducing the disease.
Workplace:	Includes all property owned and/or occupied by Health PEI.

3.0 PURPOSE/SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to outline COVID-19 and influenza vaccine administration and management directions for HCW's, students, volunteers, employees of businesses/entities operating at Health PEI facilities, and contractors. Participation in COVID-19 and influenza vaccination programs reduces the transmission of COVID-19 and influenza and decreases the risk of outbreaks. It also ensures that immunizations are provided to HCW's pursuant to the Canadian Immunization Guide (COG) and NACI recommendations.

4.0 APPLICATION

This policy applies to all Health PEI HCW's.

5.0 PROCEDURES

- 5.1 Health PEI Executive Leadership Team determines and provides notice to all HCW's of when the policy is activated for the respiratory illness season and when the policy is deactivated. Policy activation is done in consultation with Occupational Health, Safety, and Wellness, and Infection Prevention and Control, considering Chief Public Health Office (CPHO) datapoints, and is based on respiratory illness surveillance data signaling onset in our communities and/or an increase in hospitalizations in confirmed COVID-19 and influenza patients.
- 5.2 Once Health PEI has declared the policy is activated and in effect for the respiratory illness season, HCW's comply with the following measures until the policy is deactivated:
 - (a) Universal masking is mandatory for all direct patient care;
 - (b) Wear a surgical mask when within two meters of any patient;
 - (c) Follow droplet/contact precautions when caring for a patient diagnosed with COVID-19, influenza, or experiencing Influenza-like Illness (ILI) as indicated;
 - (d) Follow routine practices, e.g., hand hygiene, cleaning of patient care equipment, and cleaning of the environment.
- 5.3 The procedure set out in Section 5.2 of this policy shall also apply to HCW's who receive, and are up to date, on their COVID-19 and influenza vaccination during respiratory illness season.

Accommodation Request:

- 5.4 A HCW may require an accommodation to the surgical mask requirement set out in Section 5.2(a) of this policy due to a protected ground under the *Human Rights Act*. A HCW who requires an accommodation must submit a written request with supporting documentation to [Occupational Health, Safety & Wellness, Employee Abilities and](#)

[Return to Work team.](#)

5.5 Immunizer Responsibilities:

The Immunizer:

- (a) Is accountable to be competent in the provision of immunizations;
- (b) Is responsible to review and/or maintain current evidence-based knowledge in performing immunizations;
- (c) Is prepared to appropriately educate employees in relation to specific immunizations, vaccine schedules, risks/benefits, adverse events, and post-immunization care;
- (d) Is competent to provide emergency care to HCW's in the rare situation of an adverse event related to immunizations;
- (e) Report to the Chief Public Health Office within 24 hours as soon as observed or reported of all unexpected adverse events following administration of vaccine using the Adverse Event Following Immunization (AEFI) form. This requirement is outlined in PEI's Public Health Act under Notifiable Diseases and Conditions and Communicable Diseases Regulations.

5.6 HCW Responsibilities:

All HCW's:

- (a) Are required to comply with this policy.
- (b) Comply with the PPE requirements, including universal masking, as indicated by Health PEI as it relates to COVID-19 and influenza.
- (c) Request an accommodation for an exemption to the universal masking or mandatory new hire COVID-19 Vaccination requirement.
- (d) Shall participate in the [HPEI Staff/Physician Respiratory Illness Reporting and Work Restriction Protocol](#) as required by Health PEI.
- (e) While COVID-19 vaccination is not mandatory for current Health PEI HCW's, Health PEI strongly encourages compliance with the National Advisory Committee on Immunization's (NACI) position regarding fulfillment of a primary COVID-19 vaccine series and subsequent recommended booster doses.

Mandatory New Hire COVID-19 Vaccination Requirement

- (f) New Hire HCW's shall provide a mandatory record of their primary COVID-19 vaccine series COVID-19 (2 doses + 14 days) prior to initial hire.

6.0 POLICY NON-COMPLIANCE

In accordance with Health PEI Human Resources policies, collective agreements and applicable legislation, and directives, HCW failure to comply with this policy may result in discipline up to and including termination.

7.0 DOCUMENTATION

- 7.1 Documentation of the HCW's immunization history shall be maintained in PeopleSoft, and the paper health chart (where applicable), to facilitate Health PEI reporting requirements to the CPHO pursuant to the Public Health Act and the Immunization Regulations.

- 7.2 HCW's who have received their COVID-19 or influenza vaccine outside of the workplace are required to provide documentation of the received vaccine to Provincial Employee Health Nursing. [See Appendix A – Validation of Influenza and/or COVID-19 Vaccine Form.](#)

Valid Medical Exemption to COVID-19 Vaccination

- 7.3 HCW's with a valid medical exemption are not required to be vaccinated. Medical contraindication to the COVID-19 vaccine should be issued by the HCW's Healthcare Provider and filed in their employment file. [See Appendix B - Application for Medical Exemption Form.](#)

8.0 MONITORING

- 8.1 The Chief Human Resources Officer is responsible for ensuring that this policy is reviewed every three years as per Health PEI's policy review cycle and standards.
- 8.2 Health PEI managers shall conduct a review of the COVID-19 and influenza immunization status of their respective HCW's to assess and promote compliance with this policy.
- 8.3 Notwithstanding Section 6.1, this policy is subject to regular review and update as guidance from the CPHO, occupational health and safety protocols, and public health information.

9.0 REFERENCES

Related Documents

Canada Immunization Guide
National Advisory Committee on Immunization
National Vaccine Storage and Handling Guidelines for Immunization Providers
Immunization and Tuberculosis Testing, Health PEI Policy
Immunization Regulations
P.E.I. Occupational Health and Safety Act & Regulations
P.E.I. Public Health Act
Public Health Agency of Canada
PEI Human Rights Act

Rescinded Policies

Influenza Immunization and Management Policy
COVID-19 Immunization and Management Policy

References

Capital District Health Authority. (2013). Influenza Immunization.
Horizon Health Network. (2012). Immunization of Personnel.
Public Health Agency of Canada. (2013). National Advisory Committee on Immunization: Statement on Seasonal Influenza Vaccine for 2013-2014.
Public Health Agency of Canada. (2013). Routine Practices and Additional Precautions for Preventing the Transmission of Infection in Health Care.
Sunnybrook Hospital. (2014). HCW Influenza Vaccination Policy.
Vancouver Coastal Health. (2016). Influenza Prevention Policy.

Appendices

Appendix A – Validation of Influenza and/or COVID-19 Vaccine Form

[Insert Program/site/facility Name] Policy:

Appendix B - Application for COVID-19 Vaccination Medical Exemption Form

10.0 STAKEHOLDER REVIEW

Group/Committee	Dates of Review
Legal Services	Sept. 15, 2023
Director, Occupational Health, Safety & Wellness	Sept. 7, 2023
Employee Health Nurses	Sept. 7, 2023
Human Resource Managers	Sept. 22, 2023
Director, Infection Prevention & Control	Sept. 7, 2023
Union Partners (PEINU, UPSE, CUPE, IUOE)	Sept. 22, 2023

11.0 REVIEW HISTORY

Review Dates: _____

[Insert Program/site/facility Name] Policy:

Appendix A – Validation of Influenza and/or COVID-19 Immunization



**Validation of Influenza and/or COVID-19 Immunization
For all Health PEI HCW's**

All persons involved in providing care and/or services within Health PEI facilities and programs, which includes all employees (casual, permanent, temporary, full-time and part-time employees), physicians (salaried, fee-for-service, contract and locum), students, volunteers and contract workers

THIS SECTION TO BE COMPLETED BY INDIVIDUAL RECEIVING VACCINE

Name (print clearly):	
Date of Birth:	
Department/Unit:	
Provincial Health Card #:	
Employee # (if applicable):	
Name & Location of Immunization Provider:	

THIS SECTION TO BE COMPLETED BY HEALTH CARE PROVIDER ADMINISTERING VACCINE

Date of Immunization:	
Product: Influenza and/or COVID-19	
Signature of Health Provider:	

Return completed form to an Employee Health Office ([Employee Health Nursing Portfolios & Contact Information](#)) or email a copy to: HPEIEmployeeHealth@ihis.org

Personal health information on this form is collected by Health PEI for the purposes of your care and for other purposes permitted by the *Health Information Act*, including the planning and management of health services. Your information will be collected, used and disclosed only as permitted by law. For more information, visit www.healthpei.ca/yourprivacy. Additionally, personal information on this form is collected by Health PEI under the authority of Section 31(c) of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and will be used for the purposes of tracking seasonal influenza immunization of health care workers, as specified above. For more information on the collection, use or disclosure of this information, contact the Director of Occupational Health, Safety & Wellness 902-218-7389.

Appendix B – Application for COVID-19 Vaccination Medical Exemption Form



Application for COVID-19 Vaccination Medical Exemption Form

I am documenting that _____ has a valid medical contraindication to receiving a COVID-19 vaccine and should be considered exempt from Health PEI’s Respiratory Illness (COVID-19 and Influenza) Immunization and Management Policy. Specifically, _____ has a valid medical contraindication based on:

- A history of severe allergic reaction (e.g. anaphylaxis) after previous administration of a COVID-19 vaccine using a similar platform (mRNA or viral vector);
- An allergy to any component of the specific COVID-19 vaccine or its container [polyethylene glycol (PEG) for Pfizer Comirnaty™ and Moderna Spikevax™ COVID-19 Vaccines];
- A history of major venous and/or arterial thrombosis with thrombocytopenia following vaccination with AstraZeneca Vanevria™ COVID-19 vaccine;
- A history of capillary leak syndrome (CLS) following vaccination with AstraZeneca Vaxzevra COVID-19 vaccine; or
- A history of myocarditis and/or pericarditis after a dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine, with “serious” defined using the World Health Organization (WHO) standard definition: a AEFI that results in death, is life-threatening, requires in-patient hospitalization or prolongs an existing hospitalization, results in persistent or significant disability/ incapacity, or in a congenital abnormality/birth defect.

Previous diagnosis of COVID-19 and COVID-19 antibody test do not constitute valid medical exemptions for the purposes of the Health PEI Respiratory Illness (COVID-19 and Influenza) Immunization and Management Policy.

Given this contraindication, I recommend that _____ be granted medical exemption from the COVID-19 vaccine.

Healthcare Provider Signature

Date

Printed Name of Healthcare Provider

Date