

The Universal Influenza Immunization Program



Pharmacy FAQs

As participants of Ontario's Universal Influenza Immunization Program (UIIP), trained pharmacists must be familiar with the UIIP program, as well as the Vaccine Storage and Handling Guidelines.

This booklet contains frequently asked questions about the UIIP program for pharmacists in Halton Region.

Please visit ontario.ca/influenza or halton.ca/flu for more information.

Application process

How do I apply to participate in the Universal Influenza Immunization Program (UIIP)?

Each year, pharmacies interested in participating in the UIIP program must complete and submit the User Agreement found on the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) website (health.gov.on.ca). The User Agreement outlines the requirements that pharmacies must meet to order, store, transport and administer influenza vaccine.

What if I have questions about the application, or if I miss the deadline?

Please email the MOHLTC at UIIP.MOH@ontario.ca for all questions regarding the application process.

What happens after I submit the User Agreement?

The MOHLTC is responsible for reviewing and approving your submitted User Agreement. Pharmacies selected to participate will receive an information package from the ministry.

What role does the health department have in the process?

The Halton Region Health Department's role is to conduct a cold chain inspection for each pharmacy and to help support cold chain storage and handling. We also receive and fill vaccine orders for publicly funded influenza (flu) vaccine.

Cold chain storage and handling

Will our pharmacy need to call public health to arrange a cold chain inspection of our refrigerator?

No. Once the ministry has approved your User Agreement, we will contact you to arrange an inspection and provide further information. Usually, inspections are completed during the summer or early fall before the beginning of influenza season.

At the time of inspection you will be asked to provide the temperature logs since your last inspection (if applicable), along with two or more consecutive weeks of current in-range temperatures (+2°C to +8°C).

What do I need to know about vaccine storage and handling?

Become familiar with and have a copy of the ministry's "Vaccine Storage and Handling Guidelines" on site.

Your fridge thermometer probe must be properly placed in the fridge and should always stay between +2°C and +8°C.

Your fridge should not be used to store biological specimens, food or drinks. Bottled water in the door is the exception.



Vaccine Storage and Handling Guidelines

Available online at health.gov.on.ca

Does the Health Department recommend what fridges and thermometers to buy? If so, where can I buy them?

The Halton Region Health Department does not recommend specific brand name fridges or thermometers to buy.

You must have a vaccine fridge that is able to maintain temperatures between +2°C to +8°C. The vaccine fridge must have the capacity to handle the expected volume of publicly-funded flu vaccine. Purposes built fridges are preferred, although it is acceptable to use a domestic or bar fridge. Cube fridges are unacceptable, as they are unable to adequately maintain in-range temperatures.

Temperatures are easier to regulate in fridges without freezers. If your fridge has a freezer, ensure there is no ice build-up prior to inspection.

The thermometer used must read to the tenth of a degree and provide current, minimum, and maximum temperature readings. If you wish to purchase a thermometer from Halton Region please dial 311 and ask for the vaccine depot.

How often do I have to take the fridge temperatures?

Fridge temperatures must be taken twice every day. Failure to do so may result in your publicly funded vaccines being held due to non-compliance. Remember to record the actual time the temperatures were taken (not just a.m. and p.m.). These times are very important when a cold chain failure occurs to determine the length of time the vaccine was exposed to temperatures outside of range.

How do I use my thermometer?

There are three temperatures that you must record every time you take your fridge temperatures: current, minimum and maximum. Ensure your thermometer is in the "OUT" mode versus "IN" to obtain accurate readings.

Your current temperature is the temperature displayed on your thermometer all the time.

If temperatures are being recorded as the same number every time, then you are not clearing your temperatures. Always clear the MIN and MAX temperatures after each reading.

Please note: thermometers will vary depending on the make/model – refer to the instructions that came with your thermometer as needed.

How do I report a cold chain failure, or a suspected cold chain failure?

A cold chain failure is when fridge temperatures go outside of the range of +2°C to +8°C. To report a cold chain failure or a suspected cold chain failure, dial 311 as soon as possible for further instructions. The vaccine should be kept within +2°C to +8°C.

Do not use the vaccine until you have been directed by the Health Department. It is a good idea to bag the vaccine in the fridge in a brown paper bag labeled "do not use" while awaiting further direction. If necessary, move vaccine to an alternate storage site kept between +2°C to +8°C (i.e. insulated cooler).

My thermometer is reading really low or really high. What should I do?

If your thermometer is recording very abnormal temperatures, change the battery to see if that was the problem. If changing the battery does not rectify the problem, it may be the fridge. If your fridge has had temperatures outside the range of +2°C to +8°C, this needs to be reported by dialing 311.

My maximum temperature was fine last night, but when I took the reading this morning it was above +8 degrees. What should I do?

The first question to ask is when was the last time the fridge door was opened? Secondly, is the fridge's current temperature within the acceptable range?

The temperature may be related to a brief door opening to remove vaccine without re-setting the temperature. If you are unsure, you must report a cold chain incident to the Health Department immediately and not use the vaccine until the potential exposure can be evaluated.



Ordering publicly funded influenza (flu) vaccine

How do I order flu vaccine?

Go to the Ontario College of Pharmacists website (ocpinfo.com) and download the current year's UIIP vaccine order form. Fax the vaccine order form, along with your most recent temperature log page to the Halton Health Department at 905-825-8797. When you pick up your vaccine, the Health Department will provide you with a new order form for future orders.

Do I have to send in my temperature logs with my order form?

Yes. When you order your publicly funded flu vaccine from the Health Department, you must send in your current temperature log for at least one week. This is required with every order. Without the temperature logs your vaccine order cannot be processed.

What flu vaccine will I be getting for my pharmacy? Can I pick what flu vaccine I want to carry?

The Health Department is not able to guarantee particular influenza vaccine products. You will be given the vaccine which is currently available as supplied to the Health Department by the Ontario Government Pharmacy. You may identify the demographic for which you require vaccines (i.e., 5-17 years old), but not the specific product.

Where do I pick up my publicly funded flu vaccine?

Flu vaccine is picked up on designated days at the Halton Region Health Department's Immunization Services counter located at 1151 Bronte Road, Oakville on Level 3 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., excluding holidays.

During the first week of the UIIP program launch vaccine will be available for pick-up by all pharmacies Tuesday-Friday regardless of location.

After the initial week, pick up of vaccine is based on your geographic location:

Tuesday	Milton, Georgetown and Halton Hills Pharmacies
Wednesday	Burlington Pharmacies
Thursday	Oakville Pharmacies

Any exceptions to the pick-up schedule must be pre-approved.

Will someone call me when my vaccine order is ready for pick-up?

You will not receive a call when your order is ready. Your order will be ready for pick-up the week after your order is received.

Do I need to bring my cooler with me to pick up vaccine at the health department?

Yes. You must bring your pre-conditioned insulated cooler (between +2°C to +8°C) to the Immunization Services counter to pick up your vaccine. Along with the insulated cooler you must also have an ice pack, cooler blanket and thermometer. These materials are needed to release the vaccine.

How much flu vaccine can I order and how often can I reorder?

Your order will be assessed by the vaccine depot. Depending on current inventory, you may only receive a portion of the order. Your order will be filled based on availability and distribution patterns.

When you reorder, you will have to document on the order form how much of the flu vaccine you have left.

Vaccine administration

If I need more training on my injection skills, where can I get help?

If you would like more injection skills training, visit the Ontario College of Pharmacists website (ocpinfo.com) to see where you can get more training.

I have someone in my pharmacy that does not have their Ontario Health Card. Can they still be immunized?

A trained pharmacist may administer publicly funded influenza vaccine to someone without an Ontario Health Card provided they are at least 5 years of age and have valid documentation that they live, work or study in Ontario. However, the pharmacist will not be paid for these doses. Pharmacists can direct persons without a health card to contact the Health Department online at halton.ca/flu or by dialing 311 to find a list of community flu clinics they can attend.

Does the Health Department provide needles and other clinic supplies?

Each pharmacy is responsible for getting their own supplies.

We will not be giving any more flu shots this year. What do I do with the leftover flu vaccine in my fridge?

All publicly funded vaccine must be returned to the Immunization Services counter at 1151 Bronte Road, Oakville, where the vaccine was picked up. They do not have to be cooled when returned to the Health Department. You will be asked to fill out a wastage report for unused vaccine.