

Fall 2024/25 immunization program updates

Refer to **Benefact 1189** (<https://www.ab.bluecross.ca/pdfs/pharmacy-benefacts/pharmacy-benefact-1189.pdf>) for previously communicated information regarding the Fall immunization program, including information on the Outreach immunization program, the public launch date and high-dose influenza pipeline allocation (pre-order) for the public program.

August 31 is the last day for XBB administration

As the new KP.2 COVID-19 formulation moves through Health Canada licencing in the coming weeks, all immunizers, including pharmacists, are to **stop administering COVID-19 XBB vaccine after August 31** as per national guidance. To comply with national direction regarding the withdrawal, all XBB vaccine must be removed from physical and AVI inventory **no later than September 6**.

All XBB COVID-19 vaccine must be accounted for and reconciled in Alberta's Vaccine Inventory Management System (AVI) using the following:

- Category code "Recall"
- Reason code "Recall"

This reason code will help Alberta Health track what vaccine was removed due to the XBB program ending versus what vaccine was wasted due to vaccine expiry. Please note that pharmacy wholesalers cannot accept vaccine returns. Pharmacies are responsible for the proper destruction of unused or expired vaccine. The cost of destruction will not be reimbursed.

All pharmacies with XBB COVID-19 vaccine remaining in AVI inventory after September 6 will be contacted by Alberta Health to confirm product has been removed from inventory.

COVID-19 update

A new formulation of COVID-19 vaccines will be available for the Fall 2024/25 immunization program. It is anticipated that this formulation will better protect against currently circulating strains of COVID-19. Although manufacturers have submitted for new formulation (KP.2) product approval, there has been no approvals received yet. However, Alberta Health is planning for distribution of the Fall COVID-19 formulation to begin by early October.

The updated biological page for the KP.2 COVID-19 vaccine will be posted under the Biological products and COVID-19 headings in the upcoming weeks: <https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-immunization-policy>

Individuals seeking COVID-19 immunization prior to August 31 should consider delaying until the KP.2 vaccine becomes available. The updated KP.2 vaccine will help maintain protection against severe outcomes from the COVID-19 virus, including the currently circulating variants. It has also been demonstrated to provide better protection against the currently circulating COVID-19 KP.2 variants when compared to the XBB vaccines. Specific recommendations for the updated COVID-19 KP.2 vaccine for Albertans six months of age and older will be available in the coming weeks and will be posted at <https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-immunization-policy> when available.

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General public program launch

Pending product availability, pharmacists can begin to administer the newly anticipated KP.2 COVID-19 vaccine to the general public on **October 15, 2024**. Pharmacists **may not administer** the new KP.2 COVID-19 vaccine to the general public (no matter the individual's risk) before October 15, 2024.

General population KP.2 COVID-19 vaccine ordering

Both Moderna and Pfizer KP.2 COVID-19 vaccines will be available to pharmacies through their wholesale distributor. There is no non-mRNA vaccine available for the Fall 2024/25 season in Canada, and therefore none available in Alberta.

Tiered KP.2 COVID-19 maximum order quantity

This year, Alberta Health will be using a tiered ordering approach for pharmacies to help manage and distribute the KP.2 COVID-19 vaccine supply. Pharmacies will be able to order up to a weekly maximum order quantity for KP.2 COVID-19 vaccine, which will be applicable October through January. To determine the maximum order quantities, Alberta Health has reviewed the Alberta Blue Cross® claims data, doses administered and expected inventory supply coming into the province for influenza and COVID-19 vaccine administration for the 2023/2024 season. **The KP.2 COVID-19 weekly maximum order quantity for each pharmacy will be communicated in September in the Final Influenza HD allocation email.**

NOTE: Pharmacies must order vaccine judiciously. A sufficient supply of vaccine is available for pharmacies. However, not all vaccine comes into the province at once; the vaccine arrives in a series of shipments. Provincially funded vaccine is distributed to pharmacies through pharmacy wholesale distributors in collaboration with Alberta Health.

COVID-19 vaccine administration prior to August 31

Individuals seeking COVID-19 immunization prior to August 31 should consider delaying until the KP.2 vaccine becomes available.

- It is expected that the updated KP.2 vaccine will help maintain protection against severe outcomes from the COVID-19 virus, including the currently circulating variants.
- Specific recommendations for the updated COVID-19 KP.2 vaccine for Albertans six months of age and older will be available in the coming weeks and will be posted on the Alberta Immunization Policy website (<https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-immunization-policy>) when available.
- Eligible Albertans may choose to receive the XBB vaccine prior to August 31; however, this may mean delaying receipt of the updated KP.2 vaccine to later in the fall or winter 2024 as a minimum of three-month spacing is required between doses.
 - An XBB dose prior to August 31 may be appropriate for certain individuals based on their unique health status and personal situation. Therefore, XBB vaccine should still be administered to certain individuals until August 31 as per Alberta Health eligibility policy.

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Tdap enabled in AVBS

Provincially funded Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis) has been available at pharmacies since July 1, 2024, for routine adult immunization in addition to the current Tdap in pregnancy program. The Tdap vaccine is a Schedule 1 drug and therefore requires a prescription from an authorized prescriber, including pharmacists with prescribing authorization. Tdap will be enabled on August 27, 2024, in the Alberta Vaccine Booking System (AVBS) to allow for Albertans to book their immunization appointment for Tdap in local community pharmacies. For eligibility criteria for Tdap, please review the Alberta Immunization Policy on Tdap available on the Alberta Immunization Policy website: <https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-immunization-policy>

Tdap eligibility

Alberta Health has clarified the eligibility for pregnant individuals in the Policy for Pharmacists Providing Tdap Vaccine, which can be found at <https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-immunization-policy>. All pregnant individuals, regardless of age, are eligible to receive provincially funded Tdap vaccine at the pharmacy. Please continue to bill Alberta Blue Cross for Tdap administered to any pregnant individual, including those under the age of 18 years old. All other non-pregnant individuals must be at least 18 years old to be eligible to receive provincially funded Tdap at the pharmacy. Please refer to the policy for further eligibility information.

For assistance with benefit or claim inquiries, please contact an Alberta Blue Cross Pharmacy Services Provider Relations contact centre representative at

780-498-8370 (Edmonton and area)

403-294-4041 (Calgary and area)

1-800-361-9632 (toll free)

FAX 780-498-8406 (Edmonton and area)

FAX 1-877-305-9911 (toll free)

Alberta Blue Cross offers online access to current Pharmacy Benefacts and supplemental claiming information to assist with the submission of your direct bill drug claims.

Visit ab.bluecross.ca/providers/pharmacy-home.php

