



September 22, 2023

Dear Tribal Leader and Urban Indian Organization Leader:

As we enter the fall 2023 vaccine season, I would like to provide an update concerning seasonal vaccines and the resources available for vaccine-related activities to purchase COVID-19 vaccines.

Let me first acknowledge the remarkable and sustained efforts across Indian Country to support and protect Tribal communities. I would also like to reflect on and honor those we lost to COVID-19, including patients, staff, and community members.

We will continue to combat SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, and maintain our efforts to ensure safe access to quality healthcare at our facilities and in the Tribal communities we serve.

Influenza Vaccine: Supply of the 2023-2024 seasonal influenza vaccine is expected to be adequate to provide access for all recommended age groups, including the influenza vaccines preferentially recommended for people ages 65 years and older. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continues to recommend the seasonal influenza vaccine for all people ages six months and older. The recommended timing for seasonal influenza vaccinations has not changed this year. September and October are the best times for most people to get vaccinated.

Respiratory Syncytial Virus: In preparation for this year's respiratory viral season, in addition to the seasonal influenza vaccine and an updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccine, both of which are recommended for all people ages 6 months and older, vaccination to prevent respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is also available for certain high-risk persons. This includes approved RSV vaccines available for persons ages 60 years and older, and one of the RSV vaccines, ABRYSSVO, is approved for use in pregnant individuals 32-36 weeks gestational age to prevent lower respiratory tract disease (LRTD) and severe LRTD in infants from birth through 6 months of age. There is also the long-acting monoclonal antibody, nirsevimab, which has been approved and recommended to prevent RSV for all infants under 8 months entering their first RSV season, and all American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) children ages 8-19 months entering their second RSV season.

COVID-19 Vaccine: Last week, the Food and Drug Administration approved and authorized, and the CDC recommended, an updated monovalent mRNA COVID-19 vaccine designed to protect against the currently circulating strains of the virus. All people ages 6 months and older, regardless of prior COVID-19 vaccination status, are recommended to receive this vaccine. The vaccine is now available, so please do not wait to get your updated COVID-19 vaccine.


Like other adult vaccines, after regulatory approval/authorization and recommendation, the updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccines (Pfizer, Moderna, and Novavax, once authorized) will be commercially available through the channels used to procure other routine vaccines. Updated COVID-19 vaccines are now available in retail pharmacies. Vaccines will be available to uninsured or underinsured adults through the HHS Bridge Access Program for a limited time. Pediatric COVID-19 vaccines will continue to be available to all AI/AN children via the CDC's Vaccines for Children (VFC) program.

For any questions related to vaccines, please contact CAPT Kailee Fretland, Pharmacist, Office of Clinical and Preventive Services, IHS, by e-mail at kailee.fretland@ihs.gov.

For any questions pertaining to COVID-19 supplemental funding, please contact Ms. Jillian Curtis, Chief Financial Officer, IHS, by e-mail at jillian.curtis@ihs.gov.

I am confident that together, we can again meet the combined challenges of COVID-19, seasonal influenza, and RSV, as we work to improve health outcomes for the people we are privileged to serve.

Sincerely,

Roselyn Tso -S  Digitally signed by Roselyn
Tso -S
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Roselyn Tso
Director