

Ask a Practice Advisor

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Influenza Season is Around the Corner – Are you Prepared?

Registered Nurses (RNs), in collaboration with other health care providers, play a major role in preventing illness through immunization programs every year. RNs require additional education to develop competencies for safe immunization practice. The RN basic education program includes principles about administering injections, disease transmission, infection control, and safe sharp sharps. Additional vaccine specific education beyond entry-level RN competence is recommended when providing immunizations to your clients. Some RNs will require RN Specialty practice for immunization.

Who needs RN Specialty Practices in place for immunization?

Immunization as part of a Health Service Program, is considered an RN Specialty Practice (RNSP) for RNs practicing independently in public health and employee health. In these settings, RNs work under a medical directive included within the RN Clinical Protocol to independently manage immunizations and anaphylaxis. RN Clinical Protocols must be developed collaboratively with Saskatchewan Health, public health or community health nurses with expertise in immunization, medical health officers and other relevant health providers for each regional health authority. Please visit the SRNA web site to view the current *Standards and Competencies for RN Specialty Practices* (www.srna.org).

Where can I find information about immunization in Saskatchewan?

The *Saskatchewan Immunization Manual* is the best resource for health care providers in the province. The manual supports best practice guidelines for immunization and contains information about who has authority to immunize, informed consent, documentation, education, contraindications and routine precautions. The current *Saskatchewan Immunization Manual* is available at <http://www.ehealthsask.ca/services/manuals/Pages/SIM.aspx>

What education is required for RNs that have never provided immunization in a flu clinic, acute care, long term care or home care setting before?

RNs require the following evidence-informed formal education provided by an expert prior to providing immunizations:

- Theory, risks and benefits of immunizations
- Indication and contraindications of the vaccine
- Informed consent
- Storage, cold chain, transportation and disposal of vaccinations
- Procedures for multiple injections
- Volume of vaccine permitted in specific anatomical sites
- Identification of anaphylaxis
- RN Clinical Protocol or client-specific order to manage Anaphylaxis
- Processes for adverse events
- Documentation guidelines

I am an RN working in acute care/long term care/home care. Can I provide immunizations?

Yes, RNs who hold a practicing SRNA licence and who have the education, knowledge, skills and abilities can administer immunizations and vaccines with a client-specific order from a physician or an RN(NP). The RN would need either a client-specific physician/RN(NP) order to manage the anaphylaxis or follow a RN Clinical Protocol for anaphylaxis that contains a medical directive. For client-specific orders, the prescriber could write orders for both the immunization and anaphylaxis treatment.

RNs are required to work with their employer to determine frequency of educational updates as RNs must maintain competence in best practice for immunizations.

Can an RN provide immunizations for an influenza clinic for our community?

Yes, RNs who hold a practicing SRNA licence and are not employed by public health can provide immunizations at an influenza clinic through a medical directive from the Regional Medical Health Officer. The RN is responsible for having the knowledge, skills and abilities to implement the regional RN Clinical Protocol and medical directive for immunization and anaphylaxis management. RNs in this situation would not require client-specific orders for each individual client. The SRNA recommends that RNs work with their educators and agencies to ensure RN Clinical Protocols include necessary direction for influenza clinics. Is pre-loading syringes acceptable RN practice? Pre-loaded syringes are vaccines that come from the manufacturer, ready to use. Vaccines contained in vials or ampules “should ideally be drawn into the syringe immediately before use” (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2013, para 16). The Saskatchewan Ministry of Health also discourages pre-loading medications in syringes because of product instability and increased risk of administration errors (2014). Additional information about preparing immunization is available in the *Saskatchewan Immunization Manual*.

This article replaces the information in the SRNA, *Guidelines for Immunization Administration & Immunization Programs* (2003) and the SRNA Ask a Practice Advisor, *Considerations for Influenza and other Immunizations* (2005).

SRNA practice advisors are available to discuss immunization practice issues if you are unable to find the information you require in the previously mentioned resources. To contact the SRNA for practice advice please call 1-800-667-9945 or 306-359-4200 (ask to speak to a practice advisor), or you can email us at practiceadvice@srna.org

Resources

All SRNA Documents are available on the SRNA web site www.srna.org

Public Health Agency of Canada. (2013). Key immunization information.

Canadian immunization guide. Retrieved from <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/cig-gci/p01-08-eng.php>

Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association. (2016). *Standards and competencies for RN specialty practices*. Regina, SK: author.

Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association. (2015). *Medication management for RNs: A patient centred decision-making framework*.

Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association. (2013). *Standards and foundation competencies for the practice of registered nurses*.

Government of Saskatchewan. h. (2014). *Saskatchewan immunization manual*. Regina, SK: author. Retrieved from <http://www.ehealthsask.ca/services/manuals/Documents/sim-chapter8.pdf>