



PRACTICE GUIDELINE

Immunizations

The College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia (CLPNNS) is the regulatory body for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN) of Nova Scotia. The mandate of CLPNNS is to protect the public and does so by establishing and enforcing requirements for entry into the profession, Standards of Practice and a Code of Ethics. Through the privilege of self-regulation, the College promotes the delivery of safe, competent and ethical care to clients through the continued competency requirements of its members. The College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia maintains that LPNs are accountable for their own practice and actions at all times

Introduction

Licensed Practical Nurses provide immunization services variety of settings including: hospitals, long term care centers, community agencies, clinics and clients' homes. LPNs are responsible to assess the health status of clients before, during and after the administration of immunizations, manage any adverse effects of immunizations and perform ongoing assessment of their own continuing learning needs.

Administration of Immunizations*

Administration of immunizations is a ***beyond entry level competency***. Competency in the administration of immunizations may be achieved in two (2) ways:

1. Complete an accredited/approved post-graduate immunization course, such as the one offered at Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC);
2. Complete an employer-based immunization course, consisting of a learning module(s) and clinical learning opportunity.

Successful completion of a current Pharmacology and Medication Administration course is a prerequisite to taking a post-graduate or employer-based immunization course.

Immunization education (whether post-graduate or employer based) builds on the LPNs existing knowledge base. The goal of a course is to provide the LPN with the new knowledge, skill and judgment necessary to attain and maintain competence in administration of immunizations. An immunization course includes theory or a learning module(s) and a mentored clinical learning opportunity component in: (but not limited to)

- Theory (includes administration) of immunizations;
- Risks and benefits of vaccinations;
- Indications and contraindications of vaccinations;
- Nursing management of anaphylaxis (include administration of select emergency drugs);
- Informed consent;
- Communication and notification of adverse events;
- Storage and transportation of vaccinations;

- Appropriate referrals, and;
- Documentation and reporting immunizations.

* Includes: immunizations, vaccinations, allergy testing and desensitizing medications

Clients Under the Age of 5

Typically, community college or post-graduate immunization courses provide an introduction to infant and child immunizations. The information, though helpful, is not comprehensive enough to support LPNs in this practice. LPNs who successfully complete a community college based post-graduate immunization course *must* complete an employer based education module (in addition to a pharmacology/medication administration course *and* an immunization course) specific to immunization of clients under the age of 5 before they can engage in this practice in their clinical context.

Employers who rely on an employer based immunization course and require LPNs to immunize clients under the age of 5, may wish to consider including this theory in their course from the outset.

Determining Appropriate Practice Context

The College supports and encourages LPNs to optimize their practice within their professional scope of practice, clinical parameters defined by employers through policies and procedures and their individual competency. They are expected to practice in accordance with the following documents:

- The Licensed Practical Nurses Act (2006);
- The Standards of Practice/Code of Ethics, and;
- The Continuing Competency Profile.

Immunization administration involves varying degrees of risk and is potentially life threatening. On an individual basis, nurses can contribute to protecting the public from harm by implementing the following strategies:

- Ensure adequate references, resources, practice supports are readily available;
- Ensure processes to support consultation and collaboration are available and in place;
- Research unfamiliar vaccines/substances/agents prior to administration;
- Appropriately assess clients before and after administration of medication;
- Administer immunizations according to best practice guidelines;
- Ensure that physician orders are clear and legible, appropriate policies and procedures and informed consents are in place;
- Know who, what, when and where the emergency response resources are, their location, and the respective emergency protocols;
- In the event of an adverse client response, implement emergency protocols, contact respective practitioner and complete forms according to agency policies, and;
- Document accurately.

LPNs are accountable to recognize situations where the needs of the client are beyond their individual scope of practice or competency and consult with the appropriate care provider to ensure clients receive safe, competent and ethical care (LPN Act, 2006). It is important that LPNs and employers recognize that client needs and practice context determine the right nurse to enact a skill. LPNs and employers must be able to clearly articulate clinical contexts which do and do not support the LPN to engage in immunizations. Programs and education modules should contain information to assist LPNs in the determination of appropriate practice contexts. The responsibility of verifying a nurse's current and ongoing competence in relation to immunizations rests with the nurse and the employer.

Employers are required to have processes in place to support consultation to appropriate care providers when clients present with, or develop care issues that are beyond the practice capacities of the nurse. This applies equally to nurses administering immunizations and front-line nurses caring for clients pre and post immunization.

Transferability of Immunization Skills

Approved/accredited immunization courses are transferable to all sites across Nova Scotia. Immunization programs offered by employers are practice specific and, **may not transfer** to other employers or jurisdictions.

Employers set the practice context with policies and may require a nurse to complete a post-graduate course or an employer based program (or both), before performing in immunizations in their employment setting. Nurses are accountable to work with their employers to determine if additional new employer specific education is required before engaging this skill in a new workplace. CLPNS supports an employer-based PLAR process for members moving within Nova Scotia or coming from jurisdictions outside Nova Scotia.

References

College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia, (2008). *Competency Profile for Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia*, Halifax, Author.

College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia, (2010). *Practice Memo: Entry Level and Beyond Entry Level Competencies for LPN*, Halifax, Author.

http://www.clpnns.ca/practice_memos/EntryandBeyondEntryLevelCompetencies.pdf

College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia, (2011). *Immunization Guidelines for Registered Nurses*, Halifax, Author. <http://www.cmns.ca/documents/Immunization%20Guidelines%20WEB%202011.pdf>

Government of Nova Scotia, *Licensed Practical Nurses Act*, Statutes of Nova Scotia, c.17, Halifax, 2006.

Government of Nova Scotia, *LPNs Regulations of the Licensed Practical Nurses Act*, c. 17, Halifax, Registry of Regulations, 2006.

Saskatchewan Association of Licensed Practical Nurses Immunization Guidelines