

2023-2024 Influenza Fact Sheet

Influenza Vaccines

The publicly-funded Influenza (flu) vaccines this year are FluLaval Tetra, Fluzone® QIV, Fluzone® QIV-HD, Fluad® TIV-adj.

Influenza Illness

Influenza virus (the flu) is a virus that spreads very easily that can infect the nose, throat and lungs. It is caused by influenza A and B viruses. The flu is spread by droplets from people who are sick with the virus through a cough, sneeze or talking. These droplets can land in the mouths, noses or eyes of people who are close, within a two-metre distance.

The symptoms are sudden onset of fever, sore throat, runny nose, cough, headaches, chills, muscle aches, feeling tired, and loss of appetite. In children, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea can occur. Children under five years of age, pregnant people, older adults, and people with health conditions are at the most risk of getting very sick. Getting the flu vaccine each year is the best way to prevent the flu. Vaccines are safe, effective and the best way to protect yourself against getting very sick.

Vaccine Benefits

Flu vaccination is recommended for everyone aged six months and older. How much protection the vaccine gives depends on a person's immune system and the match with the virus strains spreading that year.

The vaccine provides some protection even when the match is not exact. Flu vaccines are about 50% effective in preventing the flu in healthy adults. The vaccine also reduces the risk of serious flu complications by 50%. The flu vaccine cannot make you sick from influenza because it does not contain any live virus. It takes two weeks for your body to develop an immune response from the vaccine.

Children under the age of nine years old who are getting the flu vaccine for the first time need a second dose at least four weeks after the first dose.

The flu shot is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older. It is:

- safe (including for kids and if you are pregnant or breastfeeding)
- free

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- available from your doctor or nurse practitioner, and at participating pharmacies and local public health units across the province
- proven to reduce the number of doctor visits, hospitalizations and deaths related to the flu
- different each year because the virus changes frequently – so you need to get it every fall

Vaccines for Adults 65+

The flu can make older adults very sick. There are two vaccines (Fluzone® QIV-HD, Fluad® TIV-adj) approved just for seniors to give better protection against the flu. Both vaccines may cause soreness, redness and swelling where the vaccine was given, lasting a few days longer than the standard flu vaccine.

The most important thing is for older adults to be vaccinated. Do not delay vaccination to wait for a particular vaccine product.

Pregnant People

The flu is more likely to cause illness that results in hospitalization in pregnant people than in people of reproductive age who are not pregnant. The flu vaccine is safe and recommended for pregnant and breastfeeding people to reduce the risk of getting very sick from the flu. Vaccination can also protect the fetus and newborn.

Side Effects and Risks

It is much safer to get the flu vaccine than to get the flu. Flu vaccines are safe, and side effects are usually mild and last only a few days. Common side effects include pain, redness and swelling at the injection site, headache, fever, muscle aches, joint pain or feeling tired. Side effects in children include irritability, drowsiness, or loss of appetite.

In rare cases, serious allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) can occur. Seek medical attention if you have trouble breathing, rash or swelling of the face and throat. Allergic reactions can be treated and are usually temporary. The risk of Oculo-Respiratory

Syndrome is very low. The risk of Guillain-Barre Syndrome after flu vaccination is also very low, at about one case in a million flu vaccines given. The risk of Guillain-Barre Syndrome is higher following an influenza infection.

Talk to Your Health Care Provider

Always tell your health care provider if you have allergies or if you have had side effects from a vaccine in the past. This vaccine is not for people who have had any allergic

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reaction to flu vaccine (anaphylaxis) in the past or people who have had Guillain-Barre Syndrome (nerve damage causing muscle weakness or paralysis) within six weeks after flu vaccination. People with a history of Oculo-Respiratory Syndrome (presence of at least one of the following symptoms: red eyes, cough, wheeze, chest tightness, difficulty breathing, sore throat, or facial swelling) can get the vaccine but should speak with a health care provider first.

Getting Your Influenza Vaccine at the Same Time as Other Vaccines

Children 6 months of age and older and adults can get the flu vaccine at the same time, before or after a COVID-19 vaccine. For people who are eligible and receive AREXVY, the recently approved vaccine for Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), a 14 day wait period is recommended before or after getting the flu vaccine.

How to Get Your Flu Vaccine Safely

- Contact your local pharmacist or health care provider to make an appointment for you and your family members
- Self-screen for symptoms of illness before going to your appointment
- Stay home if you feel sick, even if your symptoms are mild
- Wear a well-fitted mask

For more information and to book your Flu shot:

- Talk to your health care provider / contact the Great Northern Family Health Team at 705-647-6100 or visit our website at www.greatnorthernfht.com
- Visit the Timiskaming Health Unit Website at: <https://www.timiskaminghu.com/90568/Fall-Vaccination-Clinics>
- Read the Ontario Government's [Vaccines for the 2023-24 Influenza Season](#)

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TIPS TO AVOID GETTING AND SPREADING – THE FLU



WASH YOUR HANDS OFTEN

- even after getting the flu shot, washing with soap and water for **at least 15 seconds** helps keep the virus from spreading
- if soap and water are not available, use a **hand sanitizer** (gel or wipes) with at least **70% alcohol**



COVER YOUR MOUTH WHEN YOU COUGH OR SNEEZE

- use a **tissue** and **throw it out** rather than putting it in your pocket, on a desk or table
- if you don't have a tissue, cough into your **upper sleeve**



DON'T TOUCH YOUR FACE

- the flu virus spreads when people with the flu cough, sneeze or talk and **droplets enter your body** through your **eyes, nose or mouth**



STAY AT HOME WHEN YOU'RE SICK

- viruses **spread more easily in group settings**, such as businesses, schools and long-term care homes



CLEAN (AND DISINFECT) SURFACES AND SHARED ITEMS

- viruses can live for **24 to 48 hours** on **hard surfaces** such as countertops, door handles, computer keyboards and phones