

Influenza Vaccine (Flu Shot)

Influenza Illness

- Influenza is a virus. The infection spreads by droplets when talking, sneezing or coughing.
- Kids and adults can spread the infection before they have any symptoms. Young children, seniors and those with a weak immune system have higher chances of getting very
- Influenza can worsen medical conditions such as heart disease or lung disease. It can cause pneumonia and blood infections.
- The risk of getting Guillain-Barré syndrome following flu infection is much higher than following vaccination. About one in a million flu shots.
- Getting the flu vaccine is the best way to prevent influenza infection. It takes two weeks for protection to develop.
- Flu viruses can live on surfaces for hours. Clean your hands frequently with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rubs

Vaccine Benefits

- Influenza vaccines are free for children and adults in Ontario.
- They are safe.
- For adults the vaccines protect against three strains of the flu virus.
- The vaccines are made from deactivated flu particles, to help your immune system prevent flu but cannot give you the flu.
- The flu virus is always changing so a new flu vaccine is needed each year.

Individuals who should get the vaccine

- Anyone who is six months of age and older is recommended to get the flu vaccine.
- Pregnant women to protect themselves and their baby.
- The elderly, those with a medical condition or weak immune system
- Those who look after sick people or people with weak immune systems should also get the vaccine.



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People who should not get the vaccine

- Previous severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to a flu vaccine
- Allergy to a vaccine component such as gentamycin or thimerosal
- Previous Guillain-Barré Syndrome within 6 weeks of a flu vaccination
- Persons with a history of Oculorespiratory syndrome can get the vaccine but should speak with their doctor first.

If you have a serious acute illness you should wait until you are feeling better

Vaccine Side Effects and Risks

- Flu vaccines are safe and well-tolerated.
- Common side effects are pain, redness and swelling at the injection site.
- Some people may experience headache, fever, muscle aches and tiredness.
- Symptoms are usually mild and last only a few days.

Severe side effects are very rare.

They may include:

- Allergic reactions such as rash, trouble breathing, swelling of the face and throat.
- Oculorespiratory syndrome may occur, causing red eyes, swelling of the face, coughing, wheezing and difficulty breathing.

Talk to your healthcare provider if you have a concerning reaction to the flu vaccine.



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