IMMUNIZATION INFORMATION

Avian Influenza (H5N1) Vaccine

What is avian influenza (H5N1)?

- Avian influenza (H5N1) is a type of influenza A virus that most often spreads in birds and can make them very sick. It can also spread to other animals and, though rare, can also infect people.
- People can get avian influenza by touching sick animals (alive or dead), their fluids or feces (poop), or objects that have the virus on them.
- There is little to no evidence of human-to-human spread of avian influenza.
- In people, avian influenza can cause mild symptoms like cough, red eyes and fever. In some cases, it can lead to serious breathing problems, neurologic issues or even death.

What is the H5N1 vaccine?

- The H5N1 vaccine provides protection against avian influenza. It contains killed virus like regular seasonal influenza vaccines. The killed virus is not active, it cannot make you sick, and it will help your body fight off avian influenza if you are exposed to it in the future.
- This vaccine contains a substance known as an adjuvant which is added to boost the body's immune response, so you get stronger and longer-lasting protection with a smaller amount of the virus in the vaccine.
- The vaccine is given by injection.
- Two doses are required for full protection.

Who should receive the H5N1 vaccine?

The H5N1 vaccine should be offered to:

- Individuals working with live H5N1 virus in laboratory settings.
- Individuals with ongoing exposure to sick or dead birds or mammals with suspected or confirmed H5N1 infections, or individuals with exposure to the environments of these birds or mammals (e.g., conservation staff, wildlife researchers, wildlife rehabilitators and veterinarians/veterinarian technicians routinely involved in the response to confirmed/suspected H5N1).
- Individuals regularly involved in poultry culling operations (e.g., cleaning, disinfecting) in the context of suspected/confirmed H5N1.

Who should NOT receive the H5N1 vaccine?

- People who have had a serious allergic reaction to a previous dose, or any component, of the H5N1 vaccine.
- People who are sick or have a fever (38.5°C/101.3°F or greater).

Please read other side.

www.nshealth.ca/immunizations

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IMMUNIZATION AFTERCARE

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People should stay in the clinic for at least 15 minutes after receiving any type of immunization to monitor possible reaction. As with any vaccine there is a slight possibility that a more serious reaction could occur.

What are the possible side effects of the H5N1 vaccine?

- As with any other vaccine, the most common side effects are soreness, redness, or swelling at the injection site.
- Less common side effects include fatigue, muscle and joint pain, headache or fever.

As fever may occur, make sure you have acetaminophen or ibuprofen at home. Follow the instructions that come with the product. Talk to your healthcare provider before using either of these medications as they are not recommended for people with certain medical conditions.

Call your healthcare provider if:

- A fever lasts longer than 24 hours.
- A fever is 38.5°C (101.3°F) or higher.
- A fever doesn't come down after acetaminophen or ibuprofen are taken.
- Other illness or symptoms occur.

Questions?

If you have any questions about avian influenza or the H5N1 vaccine, please call your local Public Health office (see list of offices here: www.nshealth.ca/public-health) or your healthcare provider.

For more information on immunization, please visit the following websites:

Nova Scotia Health Public Health
www.nshealth.ca/immunizations

Immunize Canada
immunize.ca

Public Health Agency of Canada
www.canada.ca/public-health

811
811.novascotia.ca

www.nshealth.ca/immunizations

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