

VACCINE INFORMATION AND AFTER CARE

Important Information about Influenza and the influenza vaccine

Please read this carefully and ensure a health care provider answers your questions before getting the vaccine.

What is Influenza?

Influenza is also called the flu. It is a viral infection of the bronchial tubes and lungs that usually occurs in Canada from about November to April. Influenza causes fever, chills, cough, sore throat and aching muscles.

Influenza can cause severe illness in some populations. Adults 65 years of age and older, babies and children up to 5 years old, pregnant people, anyone with chronic conditions like heart disease, asthma, and diabetes, people at high risk of COVID-19 related illness, and people who live or care for those at high risk of influenza-related complications or hospitalization.

Who Should Receive the Influenza Vaccine?

Immunization against influenza is publicly funded, free of charge, and advised for all Nova Scotians.

Babies and children aged 6 months to 5 years

Because of their age, babies' and children's immune systems are still building immunity to fight off serious infections.

Pregnant people

During pregnancy, the body goes through many changes that can make it harder for the body to fight off infections. People who get the influenza vaccine during pregnancy pass on immunity to their baby. Babies younger than 6 months cannot get vaccinated against the influenza. Getting your influenza vaccine can help protect your baby from the influenza after birth.

Adults 65 years of age and older

The immune system changes with age and this can make it harder for the body to fight off infections. People over 65 are also more likely to have health conditions that can get worse if they get the influenza.

Anyone with chronic conditions like heart disease, asthma and diabetes

These conditions can affect a person's immune system and make it harder to fight off infections.

People at high risk of COVID-19 related illness

People at high risk for COVID-19-related illness should get an influenza vaccine every year. Getting an influenza vaccine reduces the risk of severe illness that could happen when someone catches both COVID-19 and the influenza.

People who live or care for those at high risk of influenza-related complications or hospitalization

When health care workers and other care providers are vaccinated, their risk of illness decreases. The risk of death and other serious outcomes among the people in their care also decreases.

Influenza vaccine information

- Children 6 months to 8 years (inclusive) require 2 doses of vaccine if they have never had the vaccine before.
- The influenza vaccine is available in the fall. Although vaccination before the onset of the influenza season is strongly preferred, influenza vaccine may still be administered up until the end of the season. People need to be vaccinated against influenza each year because the virus changes.
- Being vaccinated against influenza is the most effective way to prevent influenza illness and influenza-related complications and the vaccine will provide protection after about two weeks.

It is safe to get an influenza vaccine before, after, or at the same time as a COVID-19 vaccine.

Who should NOT receive the influenza vaccine?

- People who presently have a high fever (over 39.5 °C / 103°F).
- People who have had a serious allergic reaction to a previous dose or any component of the influenza vaccine.
- Infants under 6 months of age because they are too young to receive an influenza vaccine.

What to expect following immunization with the influenza vaccine

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

- Most people have no side effects from the influenza vaccination.
- The most common side effect is a sore arm that can last for a day or two.
- Other side effects — like a slight fever, chills, or a headache — are uncommon.

Pain or fever medication (acetaminophen or ibuprofen) may relieve the pain or fever. Check with your health care provider if you need advice about medication.

High-Dose Influenza Vaccine

Everyone in Nova Scotia who is 65 years and older is eligible to receive High-Dose influenza vaccine for free. High-Dose influenza vaccine has four times the amount of antigen and offers better protection for this age group.

For information visit: <https://novascotia.ca/flu/>