



## INFLUENZA VACCINE INFORMATION & AFTERCARE

# Influenza vaccine for people aged 6 months and older

### ? 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.

### ? Who should receive the influenza vaccine?

The influenza vaccine is publicly funded, which means it is free of charge. **It is recommended that everyone over 6 months of age gets the vaccine.**

Influenza can cause severe illness in some populations. Those who are at higher risk are strongly recommended to get the vaccine. This includes the following populations:

#### 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 and breastfeeding/chestfeeding 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 influenza. Getting your influenza vaccine can help protect your baby from influenza after birth. The influenza vaccine can also be safely administered to people who are breastfeeding/chestfeeding.

#### 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 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.

#### First Nations people

Influenza vaccination is recommended for First Nations people, due to increased risk of severe illness. This risk is due to a variety of factors, including medical conditions resulting from social, environmental and economic factors, rooted in historic and ongoing colonization and systemic racism.

#### 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 influenza.

#### People who live with 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.

**Learn more: [novascotia.ca/flu](https://novascotia.ca/flu)**

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### i 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 starting in the fall, until the summer months. Although vaccination before the onset of the respiratory virus 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.
- Getting vaccinated against influenza is the most effective way to prevent influenza illness and influenza-related complications. The vaccine will provide protection after about two weeks.

### ? 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.

### i What to expect after getting 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.

Medication like acetaminophen or ibuprofen may relieve the pain or fever. Check with your healthcare provider if you need advice about medication.

### i Enhanced Influenza Vaccine

Everyone in Nova Scotia who is 65 years and older is eligible to receive enhanced influenza vaccine for free. Enhanced influenza vaccine offers better protection for this age group than regular influenza vaccine.

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

