



Influenza 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.

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.



What is the Influenza Vaccine?

- The influenza vaccine contains a killed version of the influenza virus. Because the virus is not alive, it cannot give you the flu.
- The flu vaccine teaches your body how to recognize and fight the flu virus. This means that if you come into contact with the flu later on, your body will be better prepared to protect you and help prevent you from getting very sick.
- The vaccine is available from fall through to summer. It is best to get vaccinated before flu season begins, but you can still get it at any point during the season.
- People should be vaccinated each year, as the influenza virus changes.
- It is safe to get an influenza vaccine before, after, or at the same time as a COVID-19, RSV or any other vaccine.
- Children 6 months to 8 years of age (inclusive) require 2 doses of vaccine if they have never been vaccinated against influenza before.



What is the Enhanced Influenza Vaccine?

Enhanced influenza vaccine contains an extra ingredient called an adjuvant. This helps your immune system respond more strongly to the 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.



Who should receive the influenza vaccine?

The influenza vaccine is publicly funded, meaning it is free of charge, and is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older.

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
- Pregnant and breastfeeding/chestfeeding people
- Adults 65 years of age and older
- Anyone with chronic conditions like heart disease, asthma and diabetes
- First Nations people
- People at high risk of COVID-19-related illness
- People who live with or care for those at high risk of influenza-related complications or hospitalization



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.

Please read other side.



**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 from the influenza vaccine?

- As with any other vaccine, the most common side effects are soreness, redness, or swelling at the injection site.
- Other side effects are uncommon, such as slight fever, chills or a headache.

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 influenza, or the influenza 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

Canadian Paediatric Society
cps.ca

811
811.novascotia.ca