

INFLUENZA (FLU)

Vaccine Fact Sheet

Protect yourself and those around you by receiving a flu vaccine this fall.

Receiving the annual flu vaccine will provide better protection and prevent severe outcomes, especially for those who are most vulnerable to severe diseases.

What is influenza?

Influenza (the flu) is a contagious respiratory infection caused by influenza A and B viruses and is most common during the late fall and winter months. It spreads through droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. These droplets can land on another person's face, mouth, or eyes. It can also spread by touching contaminated surfaces or objects (like phones or toys) and then touching your face.

Symptoms usually appear one to four days after exposure. Flu symptoms are usually more intense than a cold and may include: fever, chills, sore throat, runny nose, muscle aches, headache, loss of appetite and fatigue. Children may also experience nausea, vomiting or diarrhea.

Get vaccinated to protect yourself and others from the flu

The best way to prevent the flu is to get vaccinated every year. The flu vaccine, commonly known as the flu shot, is recommended for all individuals six months of age and older who live, work or go to school in Ontario.

It's safe and effective, even during pregnancy – and it cannot cause the flu. People with egg allergies can also receive the flu vaccine.

The flu vaccine is available in participating pharmacies, health care provider's offices, medical walk-in clinics and at York Region Public Health vaccine clinics (for specific groups, by appointment only).

You should get a flu vaccine this fall if:

- You are six months of age and older

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You can safely get the flu vaccine at the same time as other vaccines—or before or after them. Talk to your healthcare provider to see what's right for you.

The flu vaccine is especially important if you are:

- Pregnant
- A resident of long-term care homes or other group living settings
- 65 years of age or older
- Six months to five years of age
- First Nations, Inuit or Métis
- Have chronic health conditions or weakened immune systems (e.g., asthma, heart disease, diabetes)

People who live with or care for those at higher risk should also get vaccinated to help protect them. Get vaccinated early, as soon as the vaccine is made available to you — it takes about two weeks to take full effect.

What are the possible side effects of the flu vaccine?

Most people will not have any side effects. Some people may experience soreness, redness or swelling at the injection site, fever or muscle aches. These symptoms are usually mild and will go away in a few days. Serious side effects are very rare.

If an allergic reaction is going to occur, it may happen within several minutes to several hours of receiving the flu shot. You should stay at the clinic for 15 minutes after getting the flu vaccine so the nurse can watch for any immediate signs of a reaction. If you react to the flu shot after leaving the vaccine clinic, please seek medical attention.