

Seasonal Influenza Vaccine Information Sheet

(For IM injection)



What is Influenza?

Influenza (flu) is a contagious disease caused by the influenza virus. It spreads through coughing, sneezing, or nasal fluids. Symptoms include: fever, cough, loss of appetite, muscle aches, sore throat and feeling very tired. People usually get the flu between November and May, but flu season most often peaks in January or February.

Why should I get the flu vaccine?

The flu vaccine can reduce your chance of getting the flu and spreading it to others. Flu vaccines are updated every year because flu viruses are always changing. Because of this, getting the flu shot every year is recommended.

You will be protected from the flu no later than two weeks after getting the vaccine. Protection lasts up to one year.

Who should get vaccinated against the flu?

Anyone over 6 months of age should be vaccinated against the flu.

There are two different vaccines being used in Nunavut this year:

- Children aged 2-4 will be offered a flu vaccine that is applied as a spray into the nose. See the separate information sheet for more information on this vaccine, which is called FluMist®.
- Everyone else will be offered flu vaccine by injection as in past years. This includes infants 6 months to less than 2 years and everyone 5 years old and older.

Most people need only one dose of the flu vaccine each year. However, children younger than 9 years old getting the vaccine for the first time should get 2 doses, at least 4 weeks apart, to be protected.

Flu vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines.

Who should talk with their healthcare provider before deciding if they should get the flu vaccine?

Some people should **NOT** get the flu vaccine. Tell your health care provider if you have had any of the following and they will help you decide if you should get the vaccine:

- Severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of anything in the vaccine. Severe reactions include wheezing, chest tightness, throat constriction and difficulty breathing or swallowing.
- An egg allergy. People with severe egg allergies should not get the vaccine.
- Allergy to thimerosal, formaldehyde or any ingredient of the vaccine.
- A severe reaction after a previous dose of flu vaccine.
- Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS - a severe paralytic illness) within 8 weeks of a previous flu vaccination.

People who are very sick should usually wait until they recover before getting flu vaccine. People with a mild illness can usually get the vaccine.

What are the side effects of the flu shot?

The flu shot is safe and cannot cause influenza as it does not contain live virus. It is tolerated well by both healthy adults and healthy children. There may be mild local reactions at the site of the injection, including soreness at the injection site. Other side effects include fever, muscle aches and tiredness.

Where can I get more information?

For more information about this vaccine, contact your Public Health Unit or Community Health Centre.