

The Influenza (Flu) Vaccine:

What You Need to Know



Influenza (Flu) is a Serious Respiratory Disease

It is estimated that in a given year influenza (flu) causes 12,200 hospital stays and 3,500 deaths in Canada.



You Need To Be Immunized Every Year

Healthy children and adults can transmit the influenza (flu) virus to others before they show symptoms. The seasonal influenza vaccine (flu shot) reduces the spread of the virus from person to person. It is especially important to get vaccinated against influenza to protect those who are more at risk of getting sick, such as people for whom the vaccine is not recommended or who do not develop an immune response to the vaccine.

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends that all Canadians 6 months of age and older who do not have contraindications should receive the annual influenza vaccine. It is especially important that people who are at high risk of severe disease and people who are capable of transmitting influenza to those at high risk get vaccinated annually against seasonal influenza.

These populations include, but are not limited to:

- All children 6–59 months of age
- Adults and children with the following chronic health conditions:
 - cardiac or pulmonary disorders (includes bronchopulmonary dysplasia, cystic fibrosis, and asthma)
 - diabetes mellitus and other metabolic diseases
 - cancer, immune-compromising conditions (due to underlying disease, therapy, or both, such as solid organ transplant or hematopoietic stem cell transplant recipients)
 - renal disease
 - anemia or hemoglobinopathy
 - neurologic or neurodevelopment conditions (includes neuromuscular, neurovascular, neurodegenerative, neurodevelopmental conditions, and seizure disorders [and, for children, includes febrile seizures and isolated developmental delay], but excludes migraines and psychiatric conditions without neurological conditions)
 - morbid obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 40kg/m² and over)
 - children 6 months to 18 years of age undergoing treatment for long periods with acetylsalicylic acid, because of the potential increase of Reye's syndrome associated with influenza
- Pregnant people
- People of any age who are residents of nursing homes and other chronic care facilities
- Adults 65 years of age and older
- Indigenous peoples
- Health care and other care providers in facilities and community settings who, through their activities, are capable of transmitting influenza to those at high risk
- Household contacts, both adults and children, of individuals at high risk, whether or not the individual at high risk has been vaccinated:
 - household contacts of individuals at high risk
 - household contacts of infants less than 6 month of age, as these infants are at high risk but cannot receive influenza vaccine
 - members of a household expecting a newborn during the influenza season
- People providing regular child care to children 0–59 months of age, whether in or out of the home
- People providing services within closed or relatively closed settings to people at high risk (e.g., crew on a ship)
- People providing essential community services
- People who are in direct contact with poultry infected with avian influenza during culling operations

Who Should Not Receive The Influenza (Flu) Vaccine

Influenza vaccines **should not be administered** to the following people:

- People who have had an anaphylactic reaction to a previous dose of influenza vaccine
- People who have had an anaphylactic reaction to any of the vaccine components of a specific influenza vaccine, with the exception of egg
- People who have developed Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of a previous influenza vaccination

Additionally, Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine (LAIV) **should not be administered** to the following people:

- People with immune-compromising conditions (due to disease, therapy or both)
- People with severe asthma
- Children less than 24 months of age
- Children 2-17 years of age currently receiving aspirin or aspirin-containing therapy
- Pregnant persons

Finally, influenza vaccination should usually be postponed in people with serious acute illnesses until their symptoms have abated. However, vaccination should not be delayed because of minor or moderate acute illness, with or without fever. Talk to your health professional to learn more about getting the seasonal influenza vaccine.

Seasonal Influenza Vaccines Available In Canada

Listed below are the following influenza vaccines (flu shots) recommended by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) and **available** in Canada this 2022-2023 flu season:

Vaccine type	Vaccine description	Recommended for
Quadrivalent (4-strain)	Contains the three most common influenza strains predicted to be circulating, plus an additional strain	Anyone 6 months and older
High-Dose Quadrivalent (4-strain)	Contains the three most common influence strains predicted to be circulating, plus an additional strain, and designed to deliver a stronger immune response	Adults 65 years and older
Adjuvanted Trivalent (3-strain)	Contains the three most common influenza strains predicted to be circulating, and designed to deliver a stronger immune response	Children 6 to 23 months Adults 65 years and older
Live Attenuated Quadrivalent (intranasal spray) (4-strain)	Contains the three most common influenza strains predicted to be circulating, plus an additional strain	Children 2 to 17 years Adults 18 to 59 years

When To Receive The Vaccine

The best time to get your influenza vaccine (flu shot) is in October, before influenza season starts (typically in November). You can get an influenza shot anytime between October and March, but sooner is always better.

The Seasonal Influenza Vaccine May Be Given With Other Vaccines

The seasonal influenza vaccine may be given together with or at any time before or after the administration of other vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines for those aged 5 years and older. Talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist or local public health office about receiving more than one vaccine at the same time.



The Seasonal Influenza Vaccine Lowers Your Risk Of Illness And Hospitalization

The seasonal influenza vaccine has been administered routinely in Canada since 1946. It protects against three to four strains of influenza viruses that experts anticipate will circulate during the influenza season. Multiple studies have shown the seasonal influenza vaccine to be effective at lowering the risk of influenza illness and hospitalization depending on the age and health status of the person receiving the vaccine, and the match with circulating influenza strains.

References

Adapted from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “Make a Strong Influenza Vaccine Recommendation”. (2022.)

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/vaccination/flu-vaccine-recommendation.htm>

Government of Canada. Flu (influenza): For health professionals. (2022.)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/flu-influenza/health-professionals.html>

For more information on influenza vaccines available in your province or territory, visit

<https://immunize.ca/influenza-campaign>