



MEDIA RELEASE

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Don't Sit on the Sidelines this Year... Get Your Flu Shot. Not the Flu.

Influenza, commonly known as the flu, is a highly contagious infection of the airways caused by the influenza virus.

"Some people think that influenza is a mild illness, but it can be a very serious illness in some people," says Dr. Susan Bowles, Chair of Immunize Canada. "While most people recover within a week or two, people over 65 years of age and children or adults with underlying chronic conditions can have more serious complications like pneumonia."

About 10 to 20% of the Canadian population is infected with influenza each year. The highest rates of influenza infection are seen in children, but rates of serious illness and death are highest in older persons and those with underlying medical conditions. Other groups at high risk include pregnant women, people who are morbidly obese, people living in nursing homes and Aboriginal peoples.

"The most effective way to protect yourself from getting influenza is to get vaccinated," states Dr. Bowles. "It is a safe and effective way to prevent spreading the virus where you live, work and play."

Studies repeatedly demonstrate that influenza immunization reduces the number of hospitalizations and visits to health care providers and is effective in preventing influenza-associated deaths. "People who do not get immunized are at risk of infection from the influenza virus and can also infect others," says Dr. Shelly McNeil, Vice-Chair of Immunize Canada.

All children from 6 months to 5 years of age, people 65 years of age and older and people at any age with chronic medical conditions placing them at risk of influenza-related complications, and people capable of transmitting influenza to high risk individuals should be immunized for influenza. The best time to get immunized against influenza is October through to December but it is never too late to be immunized during influenza season.

All Canadians are encouraged to talk to their doctor, nurse, pharmacist or public health office about getting this year's influenza vaccine.

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About Immunize Canada

Immunize Canada is a coalition of national non-governmental, professional health, consumer, government and private sector organizations. It is a trustworthy and independent voice in support of immunization of children, adolescents, adults and health care professionals. Its overall aim is to increase awareness about the benefits of immunization and promote the understanding and use of vaccines as recommended by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI).

The goal of Immunize Canada's annual influenza campaign is to increase immunization rates in Canada by promoting the benefits of influenza immunization for all ages. For more information, please visit: immunize.ca