

**Influenza**

# Injectable Flu Vaccine

**What is Influenza?**

Influenza is a serious respiratory infection caused by the influenza virus. It is also called "The Flu."

Colds, stomach upset, and other viral infections are often mistaken for the flu; however, they are caused by different viruses.

The flu lasts 2-7 days, sometimes longer in the elderly and those with health problems. Cough and fatigue symptoms can linger for weeks.

More than 10,000 Canadians are sent to hospital with the flu every year. In Canada annually, there are about 3,500 flu-related deaths (NACI, 2018).

**How do I get the Flu?**

The flu spreads easily through coughing, sneezing, or touching infected surfaces or objects like unwashed hands, toys and eating utensils.

**Preventing the Flu**

The flu shot is the best defence against the flu virus. The vaccine can prevent influenza illness in up to 60% of healthy children and adults (CDC, 2020).

**TABLE: Difference between a Common Cold, COVID-19 and Influenza**

Symptom	Cold	COVID-19	Influenza (The Flu)
<b>Fever</b>	Rare	Common	<b>Common; high fever (102°F/39°C-104°F/40°C), sudden onset. Can last 3-4 days. Older adults may not get a fever.</b>
<b>Headache</b>	Rare	Sometimes	<b>Common; can be severe</b>
<b>Muscle aches and pains</b>	Sometimes, mild	Sometimes	<b>Common; often severe</b>
<b>Tired and weakness</b>	Sometimes, mild	Sometimes	<b>Common; severe, may last 2-3 weeks</b>
<b>Extremely tired</b>	Unusual	Sometimes	<b>Common; early onset, can be severe</b>
<b>Runny, stuffy nose</b>	Common	Rare	<b>Common</b>
<b>Sneezing</b>	Common	No	<b>Sometimes</b>
<b>Sore throat</b>	Common	Sometimes	<b>Common</b>
<b>Chest discomfort, coughing</b>	Sometimes, mild to moderate	Common; usually dry cough	<b>Common; can become severe</b>
<b>Complications</b>	Unusual	Can make a chronic condition worse, and be fatal.	<b>Can lead to pneumonia, respiratory failure, and can be fatal. Can make a chronic condition worse.</b>
<b>Prevention</b>	Frequent hand washing	Hand hygiene, physical distancing	<b>Annual immunization, frequent hand washing</b>



**Lambton  
Public Health**

**Prevent the spread of the virus**



Wash hands thoroughly and often



Keep alcohol-based hand sanitizer handy



Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your sleeve



Keep surfaces and items disinfected



Get the seasonal flu vaccine

## Who SHOULD get the flu shot?

Everyone 6 months of age and older can benefit from the flu shot.

### Those at high risk of developing flu complications:

- Anyone with chronic health conditions
- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic care facilities
- People 65 years of age or older
- Children 6 months to less than 5 years of age
- Healthy, pregnant women (especially in third trimester)
- Severely obese persons (BMI ≥ 40)
- Indigenous Peoples
- Anyone who can spread flu to those at high risk
- Health care and other care providers
- Household contacts of:
  - individuals at high risk
  - infants under 6 months of age
  - expected newborn during flu season
- Those caring for children under 5 years old
- Those providing service in closed settings to persons at high risk
- Essential community service workers
- Poultry and/or swine workers

### Who should **NOT** get the flu shot?

- Children under 6 months of age
- Anyone who had a serious reaction to a previous dose of any influenza vaccine
- People with a severe allergy to any component of the vaccine (except eggs)
- Anyone who developed Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of a past flu shot
- Anyone with moderate to severe acute illness with fever should wait until symptoms pass

### Will it give me the flu?

**No.** The flu shot does **not** contain live virus, so you cannot get the flu from the vaccine.

### Risks of the flu shot

Any medicine can cause side-effects. The risk of harm is small. Most people who get the vaccine have no side-effects or mild side-effects such as:

- Soreness, redness or swelling at the spot where you got the shot
- Low-grade fever or muscle aches

Serious reactions are rare and usually happen within minutes to a few hours after the vaccine.

Remain at the clinic for 15 minutes after getting your shot. Health-care providers are trained to monitor and treat reactions.

Signs of a reaction include:

- Hives or an itchy rash
- Swelling of the mouth or throat
- Trouble breathing, hoarseness or wheezing
- Pale skin colour, weakness, fast heartbeat or dizziness

If you have an unusual reaction, call your health-care provider or Lambton Public Health at 519-383-8331 or toll free 1-800-667-1839.

### What is Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS)?

GBS is a rare disease with sudden onset of weakness or muscle paralysis. GBS following a flu shot is rare. The risk of getting GBS is greater from the flu than from a flu shot.

### Boost your protection:

- Wash hands often
- Keep alcohol-based hand sanitizer handy at home, in your car, etc.
- Cough and sneeze in a tissue or sleeve
- The flu virus changes. Get a flu shot every year for protection
- Keep surfaces and items disinfected
- Eat a diet high in fruits and vegetables to help fight illness

### If sick, stay home:

Screen for symptoms of COVID-19 and follow the recommendations, according to the severity of illness.

- If you develop mild symptoms such as a fever or cough, move to self-isolation at home and rest.
- If your symptoms become more severe and you need to seek medical attention, call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 or your health-care provider for assessment.
- For extremely severe symptoms call 911 or visit the emergency department.

**Questions?** Call Lambton Public Health at 519-383-8331, toll free 1-800-667-1839 or visit [www.lambtonpublichealth.ca](http://www.lambtonpublichealth.ca).

Adapted from the Ontario Ministry of Health