

Important Information about Influenza and Influenza Vaccine

PLEASE READ THIS CAREFULLY

What is INFLUENZA?

- Influenza is also called the flu.
- It is a viral infection of the bronchial tubes and lungs.
- Usually occurs in Canada from about November to April.
- Causes fever, chills, cough and soreness and aching in the back, arms and legs.
- In some people, especially children under 24 months of age, adults over age 65 and people with chronic illnesses, influenza can cause severe illness, hospitalization and death.
- Every year, about 20,000 Canadians are hospitalized and 4000 die from complications of influenza.

What is INFLUENZA Vaccine?

- The vaccine is given by injection.
- Children 6 months to 8 years (inclusive) require 2 doses of vaccine if they have never had the vaccine before.
- For best results, the vaccine should be given in the fall.
- Because the viruses that cause flu frequently change, people should be vaccinated every year.
- The vaccine will begin to provide protection after about one to two weeks.
- Immunity may decrease after several months.
- Flu vaccination may not protect all people against flu.
- Flu vaccination is safe for breastfeeding and pregnant women.

Who Should Receive the INFLUENZA Vaccine?

Immunization against influenza is publicly funded and advised for all Nova Scotians. Immunization is strongly recommended for people at high risk of influenza-related complications and those who care for them.

Flu shots are free of charge for all Nova Scotians.

Who Should NOT Receive Influenza Vaccine?

- People who presently have a high fever (over 38.5°C/101°F).
- People who have had a serious allergic reaction to a previous dose of influenza vaccine.
- People who have a severe allergy to eggs.
- Infants under 6 months of age because they are too young to receive a flu shot.
- People who have had a serious reaction to any of the components in the vaccine.

What to Expect Following Immunization with Influenza Vaccine

People should stay in the clinic for at least 15 minutes after receiving any type of immunization to monitor possible reaction. As with any vaccine there is a slight possibility that a more serious reaction could occur.

- Most people have no side effects from influenza vaccination.
- The most common side effect is a sore arm that can last for a day or two.
- Other side effects — like a slight fever, chills, or a headache — are uncommon.

As fever may occur, make sure you have acetaminophen or ibuprofen at home. Follow the instructions that come with the product. These medications should not be taken if you have certain medical conditions. Talk to your health care provider about your medical history before using either of these medications.

Questions:

If you have any questions regarding influenza or the influenza vaccine

- contact your local Public Health Services office or your health care provider

For more information on immunization, please visit the websites of

- the Canadian Coalition for Immunization Awareness at www.immunize.cpha.ca
- the Public Health Agency of Canada at www.phac-aspc.gc.ca