



**NL Health  
Services**

Infection Prevention and  
Control

**FACT SHEET**

## **Influenza Vaccination**



### **What is influenza (the flu)?**

Influenza, commonly known as “the flu”, is an infection of the airways caused by the influenza virus. Influenza is highly contagious, and symptoms can last 5-10 days and sometimes longer. While most individuals fully recover, influenza can lead to more severe and life-threatening illnesses, such as pneumonia. Influenza can also worsen current medical conditions such as diabetes and lung, heart, or kidney disease.

### **What are the symptoms of influenza?**

- Sudden high fever
- Chills
- Headache
- Severe muscle aches and pain
- Loss of appetite
- Dry cough
- Sweats
- Extreme fatigue and weakness

### **How is influenza spread?**

- Influenza is spread by an infected individual through coughing, sneezing, or talking or through direct contact with contaminated objects.

### **Why get an annual influenza vaccine?**

- The viruses that cause influenza are constantly changing. You need an updated annual flu vaccine to protect yourself.
- Protection begins about two (2) weeks after receiving the vaccine.

### **How effective is the influenza vaccine?**

- It has shown to prevent illness in approximately 70-90% of healthy children and adults.
- As with any vaccine, it may not protect 100% of all individuals at risk. If you do get Influenza after receiving the vaccine, for most people symptoms are very mild.
- You may also contract another strain of influenza that was not included in the vaccine.

### **Does the vaccine cause influenza?**

- **NO.** The influenza vaccine cannot cause influenza because the vaccine does not carry live viruses.

### **When is the best time to get the influenza vaccine?**

- October to December is the best time; however, the vaccine can be given any time during the influenza season from October to April.



- Ask your healthcare provider about other vaccines that can be given at the same time as the influenza vaccine (i.e., pneumococcal, or COVID-19 vaccines).

### Who should be immunized for influenza?

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the influenza vaccine is available to all residents. Anyone 6 months of age and older who wants protection from influenza should consider getting immunized, especially:

- All individuals aged 60 years and over and children aged 6 months and older.
- Individuals with chronic conditions requiring regular medical care.
- Residents of nursing homes and congregate living facilities (i.e. personal care homes).
- Pregnant women, particularly those in the 3rd trimester.
- Healthcare workers.
- Household contacts of individuals at increased risk of influenza complications.
- Individuals who provide essential community services.

### Who should not be immunized for influenza?

- Infants under 6 months of age.
- Those who have had an anaphylactic reaction to a previous dose of vaccine or have had an anaphylactic reaction to any of the vaccine components.
- Individuals with a serious acute illness should not be vaccinated until symptoms have improved.
- If you have a fever on the day you are supposed to get immunized, wait until the fever is gone.

### Are there side effects from the vaccine?

- The flu vaccine is very safe. Most individuals have little or no reaction to the vaccine.
- Some may get a sore arm (redness, swelling, tenderness), fever, headache, or muscle aches but these are mild and only last 1-2 days.
- Severe side effects and allergic reactions are rare.

### How to protect yourself and others from influenza

- Get your annual flu vaccine.
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes.
- Contain your illness by staying home if you are ill.
- Keep your hands away from your face, mouth and nose.
- Keep common surface areas clean and disinfected.