

Flu Immunization Program

Immunization is crucial element of health management and disease prevention. Our immunization programs are geared to meet the needs of our patient population, by offering vaccinations, prioritizing risk and educating everyone in prevention.

What is influenza or the “flu”?

There are two types of flu, **seasonal** and **non-seasonal or pandemic or infrequent**, including H1N1.

Seasonal Flu

Seasonal influenza is a contagious respiratory illness caused by a virus. It is called ‘seasonal’ because it occurs annually during our flu season, usually between November – April in Canada.

Not everyone is affected by the flu in the same way. The most common symptoms of the flu are cough and fever. Other symptoms may include headache, muscle aches, loss of appetite, fatigue, runny nose and sore throat. However, the elderly may not have a fever. Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea may also occur, especially in children.

Most people recover from the flu within one week to 10 days. However, sometimes the flu can lead to further complications including pneumonia. Flu can also worsen a current medical condition such as diabetes, lung disease, heart disease, kidney disease or cancer.

Depending on the severity of the season, between 4,000 and 8,000 Canadians may die of influenza and its complications annually.

How can I prevent the spread of flu?

Infected persons can spread the flu virus through coughing and sneezing and by contaminating surfaces with unwashed hands.

You can prevent the spread of flu by:

- washing your hands,
- covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve, when sneezing or coughing;
- staying home when you are ill.

The other crucial element in prevention is immunization. Immunization not only prevents you from getting the flu, it prevents you from spreading the virus. Each season it is a new virus; it is important to get vaccinated each year.

What is in the flu shot?

The flu shot is made of inactive (killed) influenza virus particles. Inactive virus cannot make you ill. The virus in the vaccine is as close to the virus predicted for the upcoming season as possible. Each year a new vaccine must be created and tested.

Who should get the seasonal flu shot?

We prioritize immunization by the level of risk for serious complications. **Top priority:**

- aged 65 years or older
- aged 6 – 23 months
- those with chronic health conditions such as heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, or cancer
- pregnant women
- health care workers
- caregivers of vulnerable patients

Second priority is healthy patients between the age of 2 and 64 years. Everyone can benefit from receiving the flu shot.

Who should NOT get the flu shot?

Infants under 6 months of age

- Anyone with a severe allergy to eggs (hives, swelling of mouth or throat or difficulty breathing)
- Anyone with a severe allergy to a component of the vaccine. Your doctor or nurse practitioner can advise you should you have concerns.
- Anyone who had a serious allergic reaction to a previous dose of the flu vaccine.

Vaccination should be delayed if you have:

- a fever or
- an acute respiratory infection
- MS flare up

Advise your healthcare clinician if you have:

- a latex allergy
- are on blood-thinners
- have an active neurological condition

When can I get the flu shot?

Priority patients – see above – will receive a letter, in the fall, offering Flu Clinics at our Main Site, upstairs at 119 Isabella Street in Campbellford.

Several dates will be offered. **Please come on one of the offered dates.** You do not need an appointment. Different flu clinics are offered to different groups of patients to limit the number of patients for each clinic. **This reduces your wait time.**

If you cannot make any of the offered Flu Clinics, please call the office for another date.

Flu clinics will be opened to our remaining rostered patients after the priority clinics are completed. Those clinics are usually scheduled in December or January. Clinic times will be posted on this website, in our waiting rooms and in local newspapers.

Does the flu shot work?

When there is a good match between the inactive virus in the vaccine and the influenza virus in the community, the flu vaccine can prevent illness in 70 – 90% of people. Even when the match is not as good, the flu shot still reduces the rate of serious illness.

It can take up to two weeks to build immunity to the flu after you get the shot. The flu vaccine does not work if given after symptoms have started. It does not prevent colds or gastro-intestinal viruses.

What if I have a reaction to the Seasonal Flu Shot?

Most people have no reaction to the flu shot. However some may experience:

- soreness, redness or swelling at the injection site for 1 or 2 days
- a mild fever
- muscle aches and pains.

The above are normal reactions.

Serious reactions are rare and may include:

- hives
- respiratory symptoms (cough, wheeze, chest tightness, difficult breathing or swallowing, hoarseness or sore throat) and/or
- swelling of the face.

Seek medical attention if you experience any of the above within 24 hours of immunization.

Please report any serious reactions to us. We in turn will report the reaction to our local public health unit who records these reactions.

Non-Seasonal OR Pandemic OR Infrequent Flu

In the past, there have been outbreaks of non-seasonal viral influenza. Working closely with the Ministry of Health and Public Health, we will react, as needed with appropriate immunization clinics.

As seen with H1N1, these outbreaks can be unpredictable and may not follow all the rules of seasonal flu. Hence, we will adapt our response to fit the flu.

Where can I get more information?

Ministry of Health and Long-term Care: www.health.gov.on.ca

Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca

The Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit: www.hkpr.on.ca

Canadian Coalition for Influenza Immunization Awareness and Promotion: www.immunize.cpha.ca

Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Influenza: Prevention and Control: www.cdc.gov/flu

Canadian Pediatric Society: www.caringforkids.cps.ca