



Flu shots



save lives



This fall get a flu shot,
not the flu.

In Nova Scotia, flu shots are FREE for those who need them most.

Flu shots are FREE for:

- Children and adults with:
 - Asthma
 - Bronchitis
 - Emphysema
 - Cystic fibrosis
 - Heart disease
 - Immune suppression
 - Kidney disease
 - Diabetes
 - Anemia
 - Cancer
 - HIV/AIDS
- Children and teens (up to 18 years) on long-term acetylsalicylic acid (ASA) therapy
- Anyone 65 or older
- Anyone who lives with or cares for someone in the above three groups
- Children 6 months to 23 months of age
- Nursing home or chronic care facility residents and staff
- Health care workers, fire fighters and police officers

Remember:

Your flu shot is free if you live with or take care of someone who is over age 65.

It is also free if you live with or take care of someone who has a health condition like those listed above.

What is the flu?

The flu is an infection caused by a virus. The flu affects your respiratory system—that is, your nose, throat and lungs—and may also give you a fever, tiredness, and general aches and pains.

The medical term for the flu is influenza.

Why should I get a flu shot?

You should get a flu shot every year because the flu can make you very sick. The flu shot contains influenza vaccine that protects you from getting the flu.



Every year between 500 and 1500 Canadians, mostly seniors, will die from pneumonia and other complications of the flu.

Why do I need to get a shot every year?

There are two reasons to get a flu shot every year:

- There are many different kinds of flu. Each year, the vaccine in the flu shot is changed to protect against the types of flu that are expected that year.
- Protection from the flu shot only lasts for about six months.

Does everyone need a flu shot?

Everyone can benefit from a flu shot.

Flu shots are particularly important for those who have a health condition that makes flu especially dangerous for them and for the health care workers and caregivers who come in close contact with these people.

Flu is especially dangerous for:

- Anyone (adult or child) with a chronic illness
- Older adults (over age 65) with weaker immune systems



Health care workers and other caregivers need a yearly flu shot to protect their patients.



What if I don't get a flu shot?

Without a flu shot, you are at much greater risk of getting flu and its complications such as pneumonia.

Because you can be infected with the flu virus and not have symptoms, you are also at greater risk of passing the illness on to others.

When you get a flu shot, you protect not only your own health, but the health of the people around you.

Are flu shots safe?

Yes they are.

A flu shot will **NOT** give you the flu. You can only get the flu from contact with living flu virus. The vaccine in the flu shot does **NOT** contain living virus.

If you have a chronic illness, a flu shot will **NOT** make it worse.

Flu shots are **SAFE** for pregnant and breastfeeding women.

How well does the shot work?

Flu shots work very well. Most of the time they prevent the flu. If you do get the flu, you will get a much milder case if you've had a flu shot.

Seniors who get a yearly flu shot are less likely to develop complications, need to go to the hospital, or die from the flu.

Are there any side effects?

Most people have no reactions or side effects from a flu shot.

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.



When's the best time to get a yearly flu shot?

The best time is between mid-October and December.

A flu shot takes about two weeks to start to work, and will protect you for about six months.

Where can I get my shot?

You can get a flu shot from:

- Your family doctor
- Public Health Services
- Community clinics



Where can I get more information?

You can get more information about the flu and flu shots from your doctor or the nearest Public Health Services office.

- Amherst: 667-3319 or 1-800-767-3319
- Antigonish: 863-2743
- Bridgewater: 543-0850
- Dartmouth: 481-5800
- New Glasgow: 752-5151
- Sydney: 563-2400
- Truro: 893-5820
- Wolfville: 542-6310
- Yarmouth: 742-7141

You can also visit the Department of Health's website on the flu: www.gov.ns.ca/health/ocmoh/flu.htm

*By getting a flu shot, you protect
your own health and the health of
the people around you.*

This brochure was developed in cooperation with:

- Canadian Cancer Society, Nova Scotia Division
- Group of IX Seniors' Organizations
- Heart and Stroke Foundation of Nova Scotia
- Lung Association, Nova Scotia
- Doctors Nova Scotia
- Nova Scotia Association of Health Organizations
- Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia
- Senior Citizens' Secretariat
- Infection Control Association of Nova Scotia
- Nova Scotia Nurses Union
- Nova Scotia Government Employees Union

Public Health Services



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www.gov.ns.ca/health/PublicHealth