

---

## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
2006HEALTH0067-001327  
Nov. 6, 2006

Ministry of Health

### **GET IMMUNIZED! FLU CLINICS OPEN ACROSS THE PROVINCE**

VANCOUVER – Influenza immunization clinics open today at public health offices throughout the province, providing free vaccinations to eligible British Columbians in higher risk groups, announced Health Minister George Abbott.

“Having an annual flu shot is a great step that we can take to keep ourselves healthy,” said Abbott, after getting his flu shot at Vancouver Coastal Health’s first immunization clinic. “This year, the provincial government is providing over 1.23 million doses of influenza vaccine to help protect young children, seniors and other at-risk British Columbians – an increase of 70,000 doses over last year.”

Influenza (flu) is a viral upper respiratory illness that comes on suddenly, causing symptoms such as fever, body aches, headache, fatigue, loss of appetite, a dry cough, and a sore or dry throat. The flu is not the same as the common cold; flu symptoms are usually more severe, and you will often miss more work or school than you would with a cold.

“Immunization, combined with good hygiene practices – especially hand washing – is the best defence against influenza,” said Dr. Perry Kendall, Provincial Health Officer. “The influenza vaccine is safe and effective, and especially important for people at higher risk, such as very young children, the elderly, and those with other chronic health conditions.”

The standard influenza vaccine, also known as the “flu shot,” is given by injection. Immunization is recommended for, and provided free through public health clinics beginning Nov. 6 to, eligible British Columbians:

- People 65 and older and their caregivers
- Children and adults with chronic health conditions and their household contacts
- Health-care workers
- Emergency responders
- Healthy children aged 6-23 months
- Household contacts and caregivers of infants aged 0-23 months
- Pregnant women in their third trimester
- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic care facilities
- People who work with poultry and swine

Additionally, many companies also support free vaccinations for their employees, and anyone can purchase the flu vaccine through private clinics and doctors’ offices.

Funding for British Columbia's immunization programs, including influenza, has more than doubled since 2002/03. For 2005/06, the Province provided \$36.2 million dollars to help save lives and prevent illness through expansion of vaccination programs.

For information on influenza, visit BC HealthGuide OnLine at [www.bchealthguide.org](http://www.bchealthguide.org) and see BC HealthFiles, or call BC NurseLine toll-free 1-866-215-4700 provincewide or 604-215-4700 in Greater Vancouver.

Media        Marisa Adair  
contact:     Communications Director  
               250 920-8500 (cell)

For more information on government services or to subscribe to the Province's news feeds using RSS, visit the Province's website at [www.gov.bc.ca](http://www.gov.bc.ca).