

Flu Facts

Influenza Immunization Is Vital for Health Care Workers

Influenza and its attendant complication of pneumonia remains the leading annual preventable cause of death due to infectious disease in Canada. More than 90 per cent of these deaths are frail, elderly people, particularly those living in health care facilities or with underlying health conditions.

Health care workers are at higher risk of getting and transmitting the influenza virus because the nature of their work places them in close contact with patients. This is why each year, the influenza vaccine is offered free of charge to health care workers (HCW) to help protect the people in their care, their families and themselves.

Why do I need a flu shot each year?

Influenza vaccine changes each year to match the strains of influenza virus that are expected to emerge during that flu season. A flu shot must be given every year so that the body is protected against the emerging strains of virus. Antibody protection from the vaccine wanes after 6-12 months.

When there is a good match between the vaccine and the circulating influenza strains, the vaccine is between 70 to 90 per cent effective in preventing influenza in healthy adults. Even if someone becomes ill after receiving the influenza vaccine, the illness is generally milder.

Influenza vaccine is safe:

- Influenza vaccine cannot cause influenza because the virus it contains has been killed.
- Most people who get the vaccine have either no side effects or mild side effects such as soreness, redness or swelling where the immunization was given.
- Taking plain acetaminophen at the time of vaccination and every four hours after for a total of four doses greatly reduces these mild side effects.
- People who experienced oculo-respiratory syndrome (red eyes, respiratory symptoms, and/or facial swelling) following their influenza vaccine in recent years may be safely revaccinated. Anyone with concerns regarding their safety should contact their local health unit or health care provider.

Do all you can to protect yourself, your family and your patients!

For more information, please visit: www.immunizebc.ca



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Who should receive influenza vaccine?

Anyone who wishes to prevent illness from the influenza virus is encouraged to get a flu shot.

In B.C., influenza vaccine is provided free to high-risk patients and their caregivers including:

- HCW and support staff in community and health care settings, with direct or indirect patient contact
- Volunteers in health care facilities, health care students, and home support workers
- Emergency medical service (EMS) workers, such as paramedics