

# Influenza and Vaccines

December 5, 2022



## What is the flu?

Influenza, or the “flu”, is a respiratory illness that spreads from person to person. Influenza is not like the common cold, but is very debilitating for almost everyone who gets it, especially infants, children, the elderly and pregnant women. Influenza is estimated to kill thousands of Canadians every year.

**Influenza this season is particularly severe** as people have not been exposed to the virus for several years due to COVID-19 restrictions.

## Should I get the flu vaccine?

**Yes!** The vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older. Young children, seniors, and those with weakened immune systems are at higher risk of severe influenza (e.g., hospitalization or death), so getting vaccinated is especially important.

For those 65 and older, many provinces (including Alberta) offer a stronger vaccine, called '**high-dose influenza vaccine**' which should provide better protection than the regular influenza vaccine

## Are there side effects?

Most people have no side effects from the flu shot and severe reactions are very rare. Common side effects include soreness, redness and swelling where the vaccine was given.

## What can I do to stay safe and healthy?



Get vaccinated! Flu vaccines are available in pharmacies, public health clinics, and some family physician offices across Canada. .



Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your arm. Always wash your hands after coughing or sneezing.



Stay at home if you are feeling unwell! Avoid close contact with people who are also unwell.



Practice healthy habits: Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious food.

### Did You Know?

*The flu is contagious before symptoms start?*

### Did You Know?

*It takes up to two weeks for the flu vaccine to work?*

### Did You Know?

*It is recommended to get a flu shot every year?*