

## WHAT IS INFLUENZA?

Influenza (commonly known as "the flu") can be a serious lung infection caused by the influenza virus.

Influenza is spread easily through coughing, sneezing or touching contaminated surfaces or objects like unwashed hands, toys and eating utensils.

## HOW CAN I PREVENT INFLUENZA?

Get the flu vaccine every year.

Practice good hand washing with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your elbow when you cough or sneeze.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

Avoid close contact with sick people.

Stay home from work or school and avoid others if you get sick.

See your health care provider if you have flu-like symptoms.

## WHO CAN GET THE FLU VACCINE?

Vaccine is offered free to all Ontario residents, 6 months of age and older.

## WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT THE VACCINE?

The vaccine is safe and effective.

You cannot get the flu from the flu vaccine.

Children between the ages of six months and nine years of age, who have never received the seasonal flu vaccine, get two doses of the vaccine given at least four weeks apart.

Children < 9 years of age who have been given the seasonal flu vaccine in previous years only need one dose of vaccine this year.

Protection from the vaccine develops in two weeks and may last up to one year. The effectiveness of the flu shot depends on the age and health of the person getting the flu shot. It also depends on how well matched the flu strains in the vaccine are to the flu strains that are making people sick.

Studies have shown the seasonal flu shot is about 50-60% effective in preventing the flu in healthy adults and children. This means that if 100 people get their flu shot, 50 to 60 of them will be protected against the flu. Some people who get the flu shot may still get sick, but the flu tends to be milder than if they did not get the flu shot.

## WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF THE FLU?

Symptoms of influenza may include:

- fever
- headache
- body aches and pains
- fatigue and weakness
- runny, stuffy nose, sneezing
- sore throat, coughing, chest discomfort
- vomiting and diarrhea, especially in children

Flu complications may include:

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## WHAT CAN I EXPECT AFTER GETTING THE FLU VACCINE?

Redness, soreness, swelling, or itchiness at the needle site may occur.

Occasionally, tiredness, headache and/or a slight fever may result.

Severe reactions are very rare and may include: trouble breathing; swelling of the face or mouth; hives; fever over 39°C; redness of the eyes and a cough.

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