



### Influenza and the flu shot

Influenza, most commonly called the 'flu', is a highly contagious viral infection of the nose, throat and lungs. People at risk of getting severely ill include babies and young children, the elderly, or anyone with medical conditions like asthma, kidney disease, diabetes or heart problems. Influenza can cause pneumonia and other complications that can require hospitalization. Some people may die from influenza.

### Why should you get the flu shot?

Influenza spreads very easily from person to person. School children are in such close contact with each other that they spread the influenza to their classmates and then bring influenza home, infecting family members. People at risk of getting severely ill from influenza or its complications, and people in close contact with those at risk, should get the flu shot.

**FACT: Vaccinating school children can significantly decrease the spread of influenza among people of all ages in a community.**

### Fast facts

- Influenza causes sudden fever, sore throat, dry cough, headache, muscle aches and fatigue.
- Most people are sick for two to seven days. People may feel weak and tired for up to two weeks. The dry cough can last even longer.
- You can't get influenza from the flu shot because it does not contain live virus.
- The flu shot is safe for breastfeeding mothers.
- Infected children can spread influenza for much longer than adults (for up to seven days).
- Influenza can be fatal for the elderly. Children can easily pass influenza to grandparents.

### When do you get the flu shot?

The flu shot is optional, and parents must sign a consent form if they want their elementary school-aged children to receive the vaccine at school. Secondary school-aged youth are able to sign their own consents.

- The best time to get a flu shot is late October or November.
- Children under nine years of age may require two shots, one month apart, if they haven't had a flu shot before. If a child received a flu shot in the past, they only need one shot this year.
- Since the influenza virus changes constantly, a new vaccine is made each year. Get your flu shot every year.

The most common side effects of the vaccine are mild redness, swelling or soreness in the arm where the needle is given. Although an allergic reaction to the influenza vaccine is very rare, you will remain under observation for at least 15 minutes after the flu shot is given.

### How effective is the influenza vaccine?

Health experts agree the flu shot is the best prevention. The healthier you are, the better your body will be able to fight off influenza. The flu shot gives your body an extra fighting chance.

**FACT: The flu shot offers up to 70-90% protection against influenza in children.**

### Stay healthy and protect others

- Wash your hands frequently.
- Eat a balanced diet high in fruits and vegetables.
- If you have influenza symptoms or feel unwell, stay at home. Do not visit relatives or friends in hospitals or long-term care facilities.

### Who should NOT get the flu shot?

- Children under six months of age.
- People with a serious, acute fever illness.
- People with a severe allergy to eggs, egg products, or any other flu shot ingredient.
- People who have had a serious allergic reaction to the flu shot before.
- People who have been told that they have had Guillain-Barre Syndrome should see a physician.

For more information about influenza, the flu shot, school or community clinic schedules, contact:  
Huron County Health Unit at 519-482-3416 or 1-877-837-6143