

# 2023-2024 Influenza Vaccine

## What is influenza?

- Influenza is caused by a virus that spreads easily through coughing, sneezing and direct contact with nose and throat secretions.
- It can result in hospitalization and death, especially in very young children, the elderly and those who have underlying health conditions.
- Symptoms include sudden onset of fever, cough, chills, muscle aches, a headache and a runny nose.
- Infected people can spread the virus to others before they show any symptoms.
- Influenza vaccination should not be delayed because of minor or moderate acute illness, with or without fever.

## How can I prevent getting or spreading influenza?

- Get immunized **every year** to protect yourself and those around you.
- Stay home when you feel sick.
- Practice good hygiene (e.g. handwashing).
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to clean your hands if soap and water are unavailable.
- Cover your mouth when coughing and your nose and mouth when sneezing to prevent direct contact with droplets from the nose or throat.
- Clean and disinfect all surfaces regularly.

## Who can get a free flu shot?

- Everyone 6 months of age and older.

### It is highly recommended for:

- Persons with a chronic health condition including but not limited to:
  - lung and/or heart diseases
  - asthma
  - diabetes mellitus (types 1 and 2)
  - neurological conditions
  - cancer
  - kidney disease
  - severe obesity
- children on long term aspirin therapy
- Pregnant women in all trimesters.
- Children from 6 months up to and including 59 months of age (under 5 years old). **NOTE:** Children younger than 9 years of age need 2 doses 4 weeks apart if they **have not** had a flu shot in the past. Residents of a long-term care facility.

- Adults 65 years of age and older are recommended to receive the high dose flu vaccine.

## Groups recommended to get immunized to protect those at high-risk include:

- Health care workers and volunteers.
- Household and close contacts of persons who are at risk of getting seriously ill with influenza.
- Household and close contacts of babies younger than 6 months of age.
- Members of households expecting babies.
- Individuals providing regular childcare to children younger than 5 years old, either in or out of the home.
- Persons who work with poultry or hogs.
- Health sciences students (human and animal).

## Who should not get the vaccine?

- **Do not attend a public immunization clinic if you have any new or worsening respiratory symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose) or if you have tested positive for COVID-19, until you are symptom-free or 5 days have passed since your test.**
- Babies younger than 6 months old.
- People who had a serious or life-threatening reaction to a previous dose of any influenza vaccine, or any components in the vaccine.
- People who developed a neurological disorder called Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of a previous influenza immunization.

## How soon will my child/I be protected after getting the vaccine?

- Protection (antibodies) develops within 2-3 weeks after immunization in most healthy children and adults.
- Effectiveness varies depending on the age, the immune response of the person immunized, and the match between the vaccine viral strains and the influenza viral strains circulating in the community.

Use **Acetaminophen** (all ages; Tylenol®, Tempra®) or **Ibuprofen (6 months & older;** Advil®, Motrin®) to treat fevers and pain. **Never give ASA** (Aspirin®) to children younger than 18 years old because of the serious risk of Reye's syndrome.

## What are possible reactions to the vaccine?

- **Vaccines are very safe. It is much safer to get the vaccine than to get influenza illness.**
- Temporary soreness, warmth, redness and swelling at the injection site and/or limited movement of the immunized arm or leg.
- Headache, muscle aches, fever, chills, fatigue, joint pain, irritability, sweating, loss of appetite and swollen lymph glands around the jaw and neck.

### Less common reactions:

- Oculorespiratory syndrome (ORS). Tell your public health nurse, physician or nurse practitioner if you have experienced sore red itchy eyes, respiratory problems (difficulty breathing, cough, wheeze, chest tightness, sore throat) with or without facial swelling following a previous influenza vaccine.
- The background rate of GBS from any cause (**including influenza disease**) is 1-2 cases per 100,000 persons/year (which means about 10-20 cases per million people/year). Investigations have shown either no risk or a very small attributable risk of GBS in roughly 1 case per million doses/year from influenza vaccine.
- Only treat a child's fever (at least 6 to 8 hours after immunization) **if** they are uncomfortable, refusing fluids and not sleeping.

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine because there is an extremely rare possibility of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. This may include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. **If this happens after you leave the clinic, call 911 or the local emergency number.** This reaction can be treated, and occurs in less than one in one million people who get the vaccine.

### Who should you report reactions to?

- **If you have any concerns about the symptoms you develop after receiving the vaccine, call 811. If you received your vaccination from a pharmacist, please consult them first when possible.**
- For more information please speak with the person providing the vaccine or contact your local public health office, your physician, nurse practitioner, or by calling 811.

Provincial immunization fact sheets are available at [www.saskatchewan.ca/immunize](http://www.saskatchewan.ca/immunize).

Reference: [Canadian Immunization Guide](#).

## What does injectable influenza vaccine contain?

**NOTE: These vaccines cannot cause influenza because they do not contain any live influenza viruses.**

Influenza vaccines for the 2023-24 season contain antigens against an A/Victoria/4897/2022 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus; an A/Darwin/9/2021 (H3N2)-like virus; a B/Austria/1359417/2021 (B/Victoria lineage)-like virus; and a B/Phuket/3073/2013 (B/Yamagata lineage)-like virus.

### Vaccines for those 6 months of age and older:

- ❖ **FLUZONE® Quadrivalent** is latex, antibiotic and gelatin-free and contains this year's recommended influenza strains, formaldehyde, sodium phosphate-buffered, isotonic sodium chloride solution, Triton® X-100, and may contain traces of egg protein. Thimerosal is added as a preservative to multidose vials. Pre-filled syringes do not contain thimerosal.
- ❖ **FLULAVAL® TETRA** is latex and antibiotic-free and contains this year's recommended influenza strains, sodium chloride, potassium chloride, disodium hydrogen phosphate heptahydrate, potassium dihydrogen phosphate,  $\alpha$ -tocopheryl hydrogen succinate, polysorbate 80 and may contain residual amounts of egg proteins (ovalbumin), sodium deoxycholate, ethanol, formaldehyde and sucrose. Thimerosal is added as a preservative to multidose vials.

### Vaccine for those 5 years of age and older:

- ❖ **AFLURIA® TETRA** is latex-free and contains this year's recommended influenza strains, calcium chloride, dibasic sodium phosphate (anhydrous), monobasic potassium phosphate, monobasic sodium phosphate, potassium chloride, sodium chloride, water for injection. Each dose may also contain sodium taurodeoxycholate, ovalbumin (egg proteins) and trace amounts of beta-propiolactone, neomycin sulfate, polymyxin B sulfate, hydrocortisone and sucrose. Thimerosal is added as a preservative to multidose vials.

### Mature Minor Consent

It is recommended that parents/guardians discuss consent for immunization with their children. Efforts are first made to get parental/guardian consent for immunizations. However, children at least 13 years of age up to and including 17 years of age, who are able to understand the benefits and possible reactions for each vaccine and the risks of not getting immunized, can legally consent to or refuse immunizations in Saskatchewan by providing mature minor informed consent to a healthcare provider.

