

Influenza

Injectable Flu Vaccine

What is influenza?

Influenza is a serious respiratory infection caused by the influenza virus. It is also called "the flu."

Colds, stomach upset and other viral infections are often mistaken for the flu but are caused by a virus different from the flu virus.

The flu lasts 2-7 days, sometimes longer in the elderly and those with health problems. The cough and fatigue can last for weeks.

About 12,200 people are sent to hospital with the flu every year in Canada. Annually, there are about 3,500 flu-related deaths. (NACI, 2018)

Symptoms may include fever, chills, cough, runny eyes, stuffy nose, sore throat, headache, muscle aches, extreme weakness and fatigue. Children can have ear aches, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. The elderly may not have a fever.

How do I get the flu?

The flu spreads easily through coughing, sneezing, or touching infected surfaces or objects like unwashed hands, toys and eating utensils.

If you have questions, call Lambton Public Health at 519-383-8331, toll free 1-800-667-1839 or visit www.lambtonhealth.on.ca.

Preventing the flu

The flu shot is the best defence against the flu virus. The vaccine can prevent influenza illness in up to 60% of healthy children and adults.

Difference between a cold and the flu

Symptom	Cold	Influenza (The Flu)
Fever	Rare	Common; high fever (102°F/39°C-104°F/40°C), sudden onset. Can last 3-4 days.
Headache	Rare	Common; can be severe
Muscle aches and pains	Sometimes, mild	Common; often severe
Tired & weakness	Sometimes, mild	Common; severe, may last 2-3 weeks
Extremely tired	Unusual	Common; early onset, can be severe
Runny, stuffy nose	Common	Common
Sneezing	Common	Sometimes
Sore throat	Common	Common
Chest discomfort, coughing	Sometimes, mild to moderate	Common; can become severe
Complications	Unusual	Can lead to pneumonia, respiratory failure, and can be fatal. Can make a chronic condition worse.
Prevention	Frequent hand washing	Annual immunization, frequent hand washing



**Lambton
Public Health**

Prevent the spread of the virus



Wash hands thoroughly and often



Keep alcohol-based hand sanitizer handy



Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your sleeve



Keep surfaces and items disinfected



Get the seasonal flu vaccine

Who SHOULD get the flu shot?

Everyone 6 months of age and older can benefit from the flu shot.

High risk groups:

- Anyone with chronic health conditions
- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic care facilities
- People 65 years of age or older
- Children 6 months to less than 5 years of age
- Healthy, pregnant women (especially in third trimester)
- Severely obese persons (BMI \geq 40)
- Indigenous Peoples
- Anyone who can spread flu to those at high risk
- Health care and other care providers.
- Household contacts of:
 - individuals at high risk
 - infants under 6 months of age
 - expected newborn during flu season
- Those caring for children under 5 years old
- Those providing service in closed settings to persons at high risk
- Essential community service workers
- Poultry and/or swine workers

Who should **NOT** get the flu shot?

- Children under 6 months of age
- Anyone who had a serious reaction to a previous dose of any influenza vaccine
- People with a severe allergy to any component of the vaccine (except eggs)
- Anyone who developed GBS within 6 weeks of a past flu shot should avoid influenza immunization in the future
- If you have moderate to severe acute illness with fever, wait until symptoms pass

Will it give me the flu?

No. The flu shot does **not** contain live virus so you cannot get the flu from the vaccine.

Risks of the flu shot

Any medicine can cause side effects. The risk of harm is small. Most people who get the vaccine have no side effects or mild side effects such as:

- Soreness, redness or swelling at the spot where you got the shot
- Low-grade fever or muscle aches

Serious reactions are rare and usually happen within minutes to a few hours after the vaccine.

Remain at the clinic for 15 minutes after getting your shot. Health-care providers are trained to monitor and treat reactions.

Signs of a reaction include:

- Hives or an itchy rash
- Swelling of the mouth or throat
- Trouble breathing, hoarseness or wheezing
- Pale skin colour, weakness, fast heartbeat, or dizziness

If you have an unusual reaction, call your health-care provider or Lambton Public Health at 519-383-8331 or toll free 1-800-667-1839.

What is Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS)?

GBS is a rare disease with sudden onset of weakness or muscle paralysis. GBS following a flu shot is rare. The risk of getting GBS is greater from the flu than from a flu shot.

Boost your protection:

- Wash hands often
- Keep alcohol-based hand sanitizer handy at home, in your car, etc.
- Cough and sneeze in a tissue or sleeve
- The flu virus changes. Get a flu shot every year for protection
- Keep surfaces and items disinfected
- Eat a diet high in fruits and vegetables to help fight illness
- If sick, stay home until you feel better

Adapted from the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care