

Influenza

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

FluMist® is available to anyone 2 years to less than 60 years of age. It is a weakened, live virus vaccine. If you have a weakened immune system talk with your health-care provider before considering FluMist®. FluMist® is **not free** for anyone 18 years of age and over.

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 worsen a chronic condition.
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 FluMist®?

High risk groups:

- Children/teens with certain health conditions
- Healthy children/youth aged 2-17 years
- Severely obese persons (BMI ≥ 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 the flu season
- Anyone 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

Do **NOT** get the FluMist® vaccine if you...

- Had a serious reaction to a previous dose of any influenza vaccine
- Have a severe allergy to any component of the vaccine (except eggs)
- Have severe asthma or active wheezing (on high dose inhaled or oral steroids)
- Sought medical help for wheezing 7 days before vaccination
- Have a weakened immune system
- Have close contact with people with weakened immune system
- Are under age 18 and receive aspirin-containing therapy
- Have a history of Guillain-Barré within 6 weeks after a previous flu vaccine
- Are pregnant
- Are a child less than 2 years old

How is FluMist® different?

It's a needle-free way to prevent the flu. A fine mist sprayed in your nose. FluMist® is **not free** for those 18 years of age and over.

Can it give me the flu?

FluMist® is a weakened, live virus vaccine and will **not** cause the flu. Side effects in children are similar to those of a regular flu shot.

What are the risks?

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:

- **Children:** runny or stuffy nose, reduced appetite, weakness, headache, fever and muscle aches
- **Adults:** runny or stuffy nose, headache

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.

Note: FluMist® is a weakened, live virus vaccine and could affect anyone with a weakened immune system. If you receive FluMist® avoid close contact with people with severely weakened immune systems (e.g., bone marrow transplant recipients requiring isolation) for at least 2 weeks.