

2020-2021 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.

How can I prevent getting or spreading influenza?

- **You cannot get influenza from the influenza vaccine ('the flu shot').**
- Get immunized **every year** to protect yourself and those around you.
- Stay home when you feel sick.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer gel to clean your hands if soap and water are unavailable.
- Cough and sneeze into your sleeve or a tissue (throw tissue away after use and wash your hands).
- 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
- Adults 65 years of age and older.
- Pregnant women in all trimesters.
- Residents of a long-term care facility.
- 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.

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?

- **ALLERGY TO EGGS IS NOT A CONTRAINDICATION TO RECEIVING INFLUENZA VACCINE.**
- Influenza vaccination should not be delayed because of minor or moderate acute illness, with or without fever.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals with any symptoms of acute respiratory infection, including minor symptoms such as sore throat or runny nose, should defer influenza vaccination until they have recovered if being immunized in a community setting. Patients in acute care can be immunized regardless.
- Babies younger than 6 months old cannot get the vaccine.
- People who had a life-threatening reaction to a previous dose of any influenza vaccine, or any components of 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.

Acetaminophen (Tylenol, Tempra) may be given for fever or soreness. ASA (Aspirin) must NOT be given to anyone younger than 18 years old because of the risk of Reye syndrome.

What are common 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 fever (at least 6 to 8 hours after immunization) **if** your child is 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?

- Report any adverse or unexpected reactions to your local public health nurse, your pharmacist, doctor, or nurse practitioner as soon as possible.

Talk to a public health nurse:

- If you have questions or concerns about you or your child's reaction to an immunization.
- If you or your child had to go to a doctor, a hospital or to a health centre with symptoms that might be related to immunization.

For more information contact your local public health office, your physician, a pharmacist, a nurse practitioner, HealthLine online or by calling 811.

References: FLUZONE® Quadrivalent and FLULAVAL® TETRA 2020 product monographs.

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 2020-21 season contain antigens against A/Guangdong-Maonan/SWL1536/2019 (H1N1)pdm09 - like strain [A/Guangdong-Maonan/SWL1536/2019 CNIC-1909], A/Hong Kong/2671/2019 (H3N2) - like strain [A/Hong Kong/2671/2019 IVR-208], B/Phuket/3073/2013-like strain [B/Phuket/3073/2013 wild type virus] and B/Washington/02/2019 - like strain [B/Washington/02/2019 wild type virus]

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 and sucrose. Thimerosal is added as a preservative to multidose vials. Pre-filled syringes do not contain thimerosal.

FLULAVAL® TETRA is latex, antibiotic and gelatin-free and contains this year's recommended influenza strains, sodium chloride, potassium chloride, disodium hydrogen phosphate heptahydrate, potassium dihydrogen phosphate, α -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.

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.

Provincial immunization fact sheets are available at www.saskatchewan.ca/immunize.

