

2015-2016

# YEARLY FLU SHOT

Just the **FACTS**



## What are the symptoms of influenza?

Sudden onset of:

- Headache
- Chills
- Cough
- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Muscle aches
- Fatigue
- Sore throat

Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea may also occur, especially in children. Most people get better in 7 to 10 days but people over 65 years of age, and anyone with a chronic illness, is at a higher risk for complications such as pneumonia.

## How effective is the flu shot?

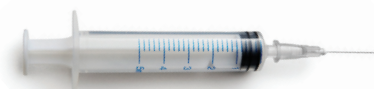
Each year, the World Health Organization predicts the most common strains of influenza virus. Vaccines are then custom made based on the yearly predictions. Generally the flu shot boosts your immune system and protects you for four to six months. While the flu shot is an excellent line of defence, it can't protect against every strain of the flu. You may still get sick even if you get your flu shot, but symptoms are usually milder.

## Who should get the flu shot?

The flu shot is recommended for almost everyone 6 months of age or older. Talk to your health care provider or contact Windsor-Essex County Health Unit if you have questions or concerns. Some people are at a higher risk for developing serious health complications if they get sick with the flu. It's very important for these people and their caregivers to get their yearly flu shot.

Groups known to be at a higher risk for developing serious health complications from the flu, include people who:

- Are older than 65 years of age.
- Are 6 months to 5 years old.
- Are of indigenous descent and live in community housing.
- Are pregnant, are considering pregnancy, have recently given birth, or are breastfeeding.
- Are morbidly obese (body mass index of 40 or greater).
- Have chronic heart or lung disorders such as, cystic fibrosis or asthma.
- Live in a long-term care home or other chronic care facility.
- Have a weakened immune system or medical condition like diabetes, HIV, cancer, anemia, or kidney disease.



## WHAT IS... INFLUENZA?

Influenza (the flu) is a virus that causes an infection of the nose, throat, and lungs.

### How is influenza spread?

The influenza virus spreads easily through the air when an infected person talks, coughs, or sneezes. The virus can live on surfaces for several hours and you can get sick by touching your nose or eyes after touching a contaminated surface.

**Please note:** If you are currently sick with a fever, it is best if you wait until your symptoms clear up before getting your flu shot.



[www.wechu.org](http://www.wechu.org)

519-258-2146

## Should my child get the flu shot?

Flu outbreaks usually begin with children, who spread it to adults. All children over six months of age should get a flu shot every year. Everyone living or visiting with a child under six months of age should get their yearly influenza vaccine because this age group can't be vaccinated.

## Is the flu shot safe for women who are pregnant or breastfeeding?

Yes, the flu shot is safe at any stage of pregnancy or when breastfeeding. Getting the flu shot during pregnancy helps protect you as well as your baby for up to 6 months after they are born. This is because your immune system can provide protection to your unborn baby through the placenta.

## How can I get the publically-funded influenza vaccine?

In Ontario, the flu shot is free from your primary health care provider, participating pharmacies, many walk-in clinics and at community clinics. People who work, live, or study in Ontario are eligible for the free flu shot each year.

*Please note: pharmacists administer the flu shot to individuals five years of age and older.*

## Is it possible to get sick with the flu from the flu shot?

No, the flu shot cannot cause flu illness because the shot is made using dead or weakened influenza virus. If you develop minor side effects such as those listed at the top of this page, this is a good sign that your body's immune system is being activated. It can take up to two weeks for your body to develop immunity after getting the flu shot.

## Who should not get the flu shot

The following people should not get the flu shot:

- Infants under 6 months of age.
- Anyone who had a serious allergy to a previous dose or any ingredient in the vaccine (except eggs).
- Anyone who developed Guillain-Barré syndrome within six weeks of a previous flu vaccination.

*If you aren't sure whether you should get the flu shot, talk to your health care provider.*

## Are there SIDE EFFECTS from the flu shot?

The flu shot is safe but as with any vaccine, may cause minor side effects such as:

- Redness, warmth, or slight swelling at the site of the injection.
- Slight fever or muscle aches 1 to 2 days after getting the shot.

Serious reactions are rare. Possible reactions may include:

- Red eyes.
- Paleness, weakness, a fast heartbeat, or dizziness.
- Hives or a rash.
- Fever over 39°C.
- Swelling of the face or mouth.
- Hoarseness, coughing, wheezing, tightness in the chest, or trouble breathing.
- Developing Guillain Barre Syndrome (GBS). *GBS is a rare disorder in which a person's own immune system damages their nerve cells, causing muscle weakness and sometimes paralysis. GBS can cause symptoms that usually last for a few weeks but most people fully recover.*

Report any serious reactions you experience to your health care provider or your local health unit.

### References:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Key facts about seasonal flu vaccine*. Retrieved on October 7, 2015 from <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm#side-effects>
- National Advisory Committee on Immunization. *Statement on seasonal influenza vaccine for 2015-2016*. Retrieved on October 7, 2015 from <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/naci-ccni/assets/pdf/flu-2015-grippe-eng.pdf>
- Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care. *Flu facts*. Retrieved October 7, 2015 from <http://www.ontario.ca/page/flu-facts>
- Public Health Agency of Canada. *Flu (Influenza)*. Retrieved on October 7, 2015 from <http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/diseases-conditions-maladies-affections/disease-maladie/flu-grippe/index-eng.php>

## FOR MORE INFORMATION.

**Public Health Agency of Canada**  
[www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/influenza/index-eng.php](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/influenza/index-eng.php)