

## 2022-2023 Influenza Vaccine Fact Sheet

The best way to protect yourself and your family, and prevent severe illness from the flu virus, is to get the flu vaccine this fall. It may also help you avoid unnecessary health care visits or isolating [if you have symptoms](#). Get vaccinated by contacting your local pharmacist or health care provider.

### Influenza Vaccines

The publicly-funded vaccines this year are FluLaval Tetra, Fluzone<sup>®</sup> QIV, Afluria<sup>®</sup> Tetra, Fluzone<sup>®</sup> QIV-HD, Flud<sup>®</sup> TIV-adj.

### Influenza Illness

Influenza virus is very contagious. The flu spreads by respiratory droplets, causing an infection of the nose, throat and lungs. The symptoms are sudden onset of fever, sore throat, runny nose, cough, headaches, muscle aches, feeling tired, and poor appetite. In children, vomiting and diarrhea can occur. Serious complications from flu illness are greatest in babies under two-years of age, pregnant people, older adults, and people with health conditions. On very rare occasions, the influenza virus can lead to Guillain-Barré Syndrome, a neurological disorder.

### Vaccine Benefits

Flu vaccination is recommended for everyone aged 6 months and older. How well the vaccine works each year, depends on a person's immune system and the match with the circulating virus strains. The vaccine can provide some cross protection even when the match is not exact. In general, flu vaccines are about 50% effective in preventing flu illness in healthy adults. The vaccine is still the best protection against the flu. The flu vaccine cannot cause influenza because it does not contain any live virus. It takes two weeks for your body to develop an immune response from the vaccine.

Children under the age of 9 getting the flu vaccine for the first time need a second dose at least four weeks after the first dose.

### Vaccines for Adults 65+

Influenza can make older adults very sick. Two vaccines are approved just for seniors to give better protection against the flu. Both vaccines provide additional protection to seniors against the flu. Both of these vaccines may cause more soreness, redness and swelling where the vaccine was given, lasting a few days longer than the standard vaccine.

### Side Effects and Risks

It is much safer to get the flu vaccine than to get the flu. Flu vaccines are safe and well-tolerated. Side effects are usually mild and last a few days. Common side effects include pain, redness and swelling at the injection site, headache, fever, muscle aches, joint pain or feeling tired. Side effects in children include irritability, drowsiness, or loss of appetite.

In rare cases, serious allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) can occur. Seek medical attention if you have trouble breathing, rash or swelling of the face and throat. Allergic reactions can be treated and are usually temporary. The risk of *Oculo-Respiratory Syndrome* or *Guillain-Barré Syndrome* after flu vaccination is very low, about one case in a million flu shots.

### **Precautions**

Always tell your provider if you have allergies or if you have had side effects from a vaccine in the past. This vaccine is not for people with previous allergic reactions to flu vaccine (anaphylaxis) or people who have had Guillain-Barré Syndrome within 6 weeks after flu vaccination. People with a history of Oculo-Respiratory Syndrome can get the vaccine but should speak with their doctor first.

### **Getting your COVID-19 Vaccine at the same time as your Influenza Vaccine**

Most people can get the flu vaccine at the same time, or before or after a COVID-19 vaccine. Children 6 months to under 5 years old should wait two weeks before and after their COVID-19 vaccine before receiving other vaccines to avoid attributing any potential adverse events to the wrong vaccine.

For more information

Talk to your health care provider, or visit [toronto.ca/health](https://toronto.ca/health).