

# 2015-2016 Seasonal Influenza Vaccine

## What is influenza?

- Influenza is a disease caused by an influenza virus which is easily spread through coughing, sneezing and direct contact with nose and throat secretions.
- Influenza can result in hospitalization and death, especially in very young children, the elderly and those with serious underlying health conditions.
- Symptoms include sudden onset of fever and chills, a cough, muscle aches, a headache, fatigue and a runny or stuffy nose.
- Infected people can spread the virus on to others before they show any symptoms.

## How can I prevent getting or spreading influenza?

- You cannot get influenza from any of the influenza vaccines. 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 not available.
- 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 free influenza vaccine ('flu shot')?

- People who are 6 months of age and older.

## The vaccine 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
  - Persons with 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).

**Get immunized every year to protect yourself and those around you.**

**NOTE:** Children less than 9 years of age need 2 doses four weeks apart if they **have not** previously received the vaccine.

## 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 up to 59 months of age (under 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?

***Those who have recently had a mild illness, with or without fever, can still get the influenza vaccine.***

- Babies younger than 6 months old cannot get the vaccine.
- Persons with a past history of a severe allergic reaction to a previous influenza vaccine or any component of an influenza vaccine should discuss their situation with a public health nurse, their physician or nurse practitioner.
- Persons who developed a neurological disorder called Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of a previous influenza immunization.

## How soon will I be protected after getting the vaccine?

- Effectiveness varies depending on the age and the immune response of the person being immunized, and the match between the vaccine strains and the influenza strains circulating in the community.
- Antibodies to prevent influenza develop within 2-3 weeks after immunization in most healthy children and adults.

## What are possible side effects from the vaccine?

***Vaccines are very safe. It is much safer to get the vaccine than to get influenza illness.***

These common reactions are generally mild to moderate and may last 1-4 days:

- 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 and/or loss of appetite.
- Less common: sore, red or itchy eyes, a cough, and/or skin itching and throat hoarseness.

- 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. This reaction can be treated, and occurs in less than 1 in a million people who get the vaccine. If this happens after you leave the clinic, call 911 or the local emergency number.
- Oculorespiratory syndrome (ORS) has been reported in past influenza seasons. Tell your public health nurse, physician or nurse practitioner if you have experienced red eyes, respiratory problems (difficulty breathing, cough, wheeze, chest tightness, sore throat) and/or facial swelling following a previous influenza vaccine.
- The background rate of GBS from any cause (**including influenza illness**) is 1-2 cases per 100,000 persons/ year (which equals 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.

Acetaminophen (Tylenol®, Tempra®) can be given for fever or soreness. ASA (Aspirin®) should NOT be given to anyone under 20 years of age due to the risk of Reye's syndrome.

## Who should you report reactions to?

Report any severe, unusual or unexpected reactions to your local public health nurse, your doctor or nurse practitioner as soon as possible.

## Talk to your public health nurse if:

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

## Mature Minor Consent

It is recommended that parents/guardians and their children discuss consent for immunization. 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.

## What do the injectable influenza vaccines contain?

**Influenza vaccines contain 2 influenza A and 1 (or 2) influenza B viruses: A/California/7/2009 (H1N1) pdm09-like virus; A/Switzerland/9715293/2013 (H3N2)-like virus; B/Phuket/3073/2013-like virus; (and B/Brisbane/60/2008-like virus).**

**These vaccines cannot cause influenza because they do not contain any live viruses.**

- **AGRIFLU®** is latex and thimerosal free and contains both influenza A strains and 1 influenza B viral strain, sodium chloride, potassium chloride, potassium dihydrogen phosphate, disodium phosphate dihydrate, magnesium chloride hexahydrate, calcium chloride hexahydrate, and may contain traces of neomycin, kanamycin, egg proteins, ovalbumin, formaldehyde, polysorbate 80 or cetyltrimethylammonium bromide, barium and citrates.
- **FLUZONE® Quadrivalent** is latex, antibiotic and gelatin free and contains all surface antigens of this year's influenza A and B viral strains, formaldehyde, sodium phosphate-buffered, isotonic sodium chloride solution, and Triton® X-100, and may contain traces of egg protein and sucrose. Thimerosal is added as a preservative only in multidose vials.
- **FLUVIRAL®** is latex and antibiotic free and contains both influenza A strains and 1 influenza B viral strain, sodium chloride, potassium chloride, disodium hydrogen phosphate heptahydrate, potassium dihydrogen phosphate, α-tocopheryl hydrogen succinate, and polysorbate 80, and may contain traces of egg proteins (ovalbumin), sodium deoxycholate, ethanol, formaldehyde and sucrose. Thimerosal is added as a preservative.

To ensure that a complete immunization record is maintained, every immunization administered to an individual will be documented by Public Health into the electronic provincial immunization registry, known as Panorama. Panorama is a secure electronic system used in Saskatchewan to record and manage immunization records and the health information related to immunization for all Saskatchewan residents. Your immunization records may also be shared with health care professionals in order to provide public health services; assist with diagnosis and treatment; and to control the spread of vaccine preventable diseases. More information about Panorama can be found in the fact sheet "Protecting the Privacy of Your Immunization Record".

References: AGRIFLU™, FLUZONE® Quadrivalent and FLUVIRAL® 2015 product monographs.