

Population and Public Health Division

Trivalent Inactivated Influenza Vaccine – Adjuvanted (Fluad[®]): For individuals 65 years of age and older living in long-term care home

This fact sheet provides basic information only. It must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a health care professional about any health concerns you have, and before you make any changes to your diet, lifestyle or treatment.

1. What is influenza?

Influenza is an acute respiratory illness that is caused by a virus. People who get influenza may have a fever, chills, cough, runny nose, sore throat, headache, muscle aches, extreme weakness and fatigue. The elderly may not have a fever.

People of any age can get influenza. Illness due to influenza usually lasts two to seven days; sometimes longer in the elderly and in people with chronic diseases. However, the cough and fatigue can persist for several weeks, making the return to full activity, difficult. Some people can become very ill, possibly developing complications such as pneumonia and requiring hospitalization. Influenza can be a fatal infection, particularly in older individuals.

Influenza spreads through respiratory droplets from infected persons, for example, through coughing or sneezing. It is also spread through direct contact with surfaces and objects contaminated by the influenza virus, such as toys, unwashed eating utensils and unclean hands.

2. How are individuals protected against influenza?

Influenza vaccine is the best defense against influenza. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI), a national expert group on immunization, recommends annual influenza immunization for individuals 6 months of age and older.

3. What is the Flud® vaccine?

Flud® is an adjuvanted inactivated influenza vaccine that is targeted to persons 65 years of age and over. The adjuvant is designed to improve the immune response to the vaccine which is important since older individuals may not respond as well to influenza vaccine as younger individuals. The adjuvanted influenza vaccine is a trivalent vaccine, meaning it is designed to protect against three different influenza viruses, two influenza A viruses and one influenza B virus. In Ontario Flud® is publicly funded for residents of long-term care homes (LTCHs) aged 65 years and older.

4. What is an adjuvant?

An adjuvant is a substance added to a vaccine that helps the recipient develop an improved immune response compared to receiving an unadjuvanted vaccine. The adjuvant in Flud® is an oil-in-water mixture called MF59.

5. How well does the Flud® vaccine protect against influenza?

Influenza vaccines may decrease hospitalizations and deaths among elderly individuals. According to the product monograph, Flud® produces a higher immune response in elderly individuals when compared to other influenza vaccines without an adjuvant. The higher immune response may indicate that Flud® works better than unadjuvanted vaccines, although this is not known for certain.

It takes about two weeks following immunization to develop protection against influenza; protection may last up to one year. People who receive the vaccine can still get influenza but if they do, it may be milder. However, the vaccine will not protect against colds and other respiratory illnesses that may be mistaken for influenza, but are not caused by the influenza virus.

6. Who is eligible to receive the Flud® influenza vaccine?

Long-Term Care Home (LTCH) residents aged 65 years and older should receive a single dose of Flud® each influenza season.

7. How many doses of the Flud® vaccine are needed?

Long-Term Care Home (LTCH) residents aged 65 years and older should receive a single dose of Flud®.

8. When should Flud® be given?

Influenza vaccine should be offered as soon as it becomes available at the local public health unit. It is recommended that people receive the influenza vaccine prior to the onset of the influenza season if possible, such as in October or early November.

9. Do individuals need to receive the Flud® vaccine every year?

Because the influenza virus changes often and may not last more than one year, it is necessary to get vaccinated every year for protection from the virus strains that may be circulating that year. Expert advisory groups recommend annual influenza vaccination.

10. Can the Flud® vaccine be given at the same time as other vaccines?

Flud® may be given either at the same time as other vaccines or at any time before or after other vaccines. Individuals 65 years of age and over are also eligible for pneumococcal vaccination, so should be assessed to determine if they need this vaccine as well. If given by injection at the same time as other vaccines given by injection, separate limbs should be used. Alternatively, the injections may be administered into the same muscle separated by at least 2.5 cm (1"). Different administration sets (needle and syringe) must be used for each vaccine given by injection.

11. Is the Flud® vaccine safe?

The Flud® vaccine is safe and well tolerated. The adjuvanted influenza vaccine is made in a similar way as the influenza vaccines that have been around for years, with the addition of the adjuvant as an extra step. Flud® has undergone the same testing as other vaccines approved for use in Canada.

Most people who get the vaccine either have no side effects or mild side effects such as soreness, redness or swelling at the injection site. The adjuvanted influenza vaccines may produce more swelling and redness at the injection site than non-adjuvanted influenza vaccines. These reactions are also generally mild and last only a few days. Life-threatening allergy (anaphylactic) reactions are very rare. If they do occur, it is within a few minutes to a few hours after receiving the vaccine. If this type of reaction occurs, medical attention should be sought immediately.

12. Can the Flud® vaccine cause influenza?

The Flud® vaccine is made from inactive influenza virus so individuals cannot get influenza from the vaccine.

13. Who should not get Fludac[®] vaccine?

The following persons should not get the Fludac[®] influenza vaccine:

- Anyone under the age of 65 years should not get Fludac[®] (Fludac[®] vaccine is only publicly funded for individuals aged 65 years and older).
- Anyone who has had a serious allergy (anaphylaxis) to a previous dose or to any ingredient in the vaccine, with the exception of eggs
- Anyone who has developed Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) within six weeks of a previous influenza vaccination

Fludac[®] should be temporarily delayed in the following circumstance:

- Those with a severe acute illness with or without fever should usually wait until the symptoms subside before being immunized. However, people with a minor illness with or without a fever (e.g., a cold) can still get the vaccine.

14. What are the risks from the Fludac[®] vaccine?

The Fludac[®] vaccine, like any medicine, is capable of causing side effects, which can be either mild or, occasionally, severe. The risk of the vaccine causing serious harm is extremely small.

Guillain-Barré Syndrome (or GBS)

GBS is a very uncommon disease that causes muscle paralysis and has been associated with certain infectious diseases (e.g., Campylobacter, bacteria that causes diarrhea). Overall, the risk of GBS occurring in association with immunization is very small. In comparison to the very small risk of GBS, the risk of illness and death associated with influenza is much greater. In addition, influenza illness itself can cause GBS, and the risk of GBS from influenza illness appears to be greater than the very small risk from the vaccine.

Oculorespiratory Syndrome (ORS)

In Canada, during the 2000-2001 influenza season, ORS was reported after administration of the influenza vaccine in some individuals. Symptoms include redness in both eyes that are not itchy, and/or swelling of the face, and/or respiratory symptoms occurring within 24 hours of influenza immunization. Since the 2000-2001 influenza season, few cases of ORS have been reported.

Persons who experienced ORS symptoms in the past may be safely re-immunized with influenza vaccine except for those who have experienced ORS with severe lower respiratory symptoms (wheeze, chest tightness, difficulty breathing) within 24 hours of influenza immunization. These individuals should seek expert medical advice before being immunized again with influenza vaccine.

15. When should patient to seek medical attention after immunization with Flud®?

Individuals should be advised to call their doctor/nurse practitioner or go to the nearest hospital emergency department if any of the following symptoms develop within three days of getting the vaccine:

- Hives
- Swelling of the mouth and throat
- Trouble breathing, hoarseness or wheezing
- High fever (over 40°C or 104°F)
- Convulsions or seizures
- Other serious reaction to the vaccine

16. Can Flud® be purchased privately for those not eligible for the publicly funded Flud®?

Individuals not eligible to receive publicly funded Flud® may still purchase it on the private market (e.g., at their local pharmacy) should they wish to do so.

17. How can my patients keep track of their influenza immunizations and other immunizations?

After the patient receives their vaccine, please write the immunization in their yellow immunization card.

18. Who should my patients talk to if they have any questions about influenza or any other vaccines?

Individuals looking for general information about influenza, the influenza vaccine or the province's Universal Influenza Immunization Program, can call: 1-877-844-1944 (TTY#1-800-387-5559) or visit website: www.ontario.ca/flu.

Questions about the vaccine that are specific to an individual's medical condition should be discussed with their health care provider or local public health unit. For a list of public health units, please visit www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx.

For additional information on influenza or the vaccine, please visit the following websites or call your local public health unit:

- a) Universal Influenza Immunization Program: www.ontario.ca/flu
- b) Public Health Agency of Canada site: National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) Statement on Seasonal Influenza Vaccine: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/naci-ccni/#rec
- c) *Immunize Canada*: www.immunize.cpha.ca
- d) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): Seasonal Influenza: www.cdc.gov/flu

ServiceOntario, INFOline: 1-877-234-4343 toll free in Ontario (TTY: 1-800-387-5559)

Version française disponible en communiquant avec le 1 877 234-4343 ATS: 1 800 387-5559
(web site: www.health.gov.on.ca/fr/ccom/flu/)