



Influenza Vaccines for Adults

(Agriflu®, Fluviral®, Influvac®)

Who should get this vaccine?

Everyone who is six months of age or older should get the flu shot every year, unless there is a medical reason why they cannot receive it.

It is highly recommended that the following groups of people get the flu shot, as they have a higher risk of complications if they get the flu:

- people with underlying health conditions
- residents of nursing homes/chronic care facilities
- people 65 years of age and older
- children six to 59 months of age
- pregnant women
- aboriginal peoples

It is also highly recommended that the following groups get the flu shot, as they care for those who are at high risk of complications, and could pass the virus on to them:

- health care providers
- household members of those at high-risk of influenza-related complications
- people providing regular care to children less than 5 years of age
- people who provide essential community services

Influenza vaccine is also strongly recommended for people who work in the swine and poultry industry.

How well does this vaccine work?

When there is a good match between the influenza strains in the vaccine and those circulating in the community, the vaccine can prevent influenza illness in **about 60%** of healthy children and adults.

Influenza viruses are always changing. Flu vaccines are updated every year to

protect against the strains of the virus that we expect to see each year. That's why it is important for you to get vaccinated every year.

Studies have shown that influenza immunization decreases the frequency of physician visits, hospitalization and death in high risk persons.

About two weeks after receiving influenza vaccine, your body develops protection against influenza; protection may last up to one year.

People who receive the vaccine can still get influenza, but if they do, it is usually milder.

The vaccine will not protect against other illnesses that may be mistaken for influenza (i.e. stomach flu, cold).

Is there an alternative to this vaccine?

Getting the flu vaccine is the best way to prevent the flu. Other steps you can take to prevent influenza infection include:

- Clean your hands often
- Cover your cough and sneeze
- Clean shared surfaces well and often
- Stay home when you are sick

Is this vaccine safe?

Like any medicine, the influenza vaccine is capable of causing side effects, most of which are mild. The risk of the influenza vaccine causing serious harm is extremely small. The risk of getting the flu and suffering serious complications is much greater.

Most people who get the vaccine have either no side effects or mild side effects such as soreness, redness or swelling at the injection site. If you experience any worse side effect, seek medical advice and notify the health unit.

Life-threatening allergic reactions are very rare.

Oculo-respiratory Syndrome (ORS)

During the 2000-2001 season, a small number of people who received influenza vaccine developed a side effect called Oculo-respiratory Syndrome (ORS); red eyes and/or respiratory symptoms (cough, wheeze, chest tightness, difficulty breathing, difficulty swallowing, hoarseness or sore throat).

Persons who experienced ORS symptoms in the past may safely be re-immunized with influenza vaccine except those who experienced **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 the influenza vaccine. Since 2000-2001, fewer cases of ORS have been reported.

Guillain-Barré Syndrome (or GBS)

GBS is a rare disorder where a person's own immune system damages nerve cells, causing muscle weakness and sometimes paralysis. It most commonly occurs following an infection. On very rare occasions, an individual may develop GBS in days or weeks following an immunization. However, just because the person develops GBS does not mean that the vaccine caused GBS.

Studies have shown the absolute risk of GBS after influenza immunization is about one excess case per 1 million flu vaccines administered above the rate at which GBS occurs in the general population.

Who should not get the Influenza Vaccine?

- Infants under 6 months of age
- Those who have had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of flu vaccine or any of the vaccine components listed below, with the exception of egg. People with egg allergies can receive influenza vaccine.
- Those who have had GBS within 6 weeks of receiving a previous influenza vaccine
- People who have experienced severe lower respiratory symptoms should consult with their healthcare provider
- Those with serious acute illness should wait until they are feeling better to receive the flu vaccine. A minor illness (i.e. cold) is not a reason to delay.

Potential Allergen	Also found in...	Agriflu®	Fluviral®	Influvac®
Egg Protein	Eggs	√	√	√
Chick Protein	Chicken			√
Thimerosal	Eye solutions, Topical medications	√	√	
Gentamicin	Antibiotic			√
Kanamycin	Antibiotic	√		
Neomycin	Antibiotic	√		

For a full listing of all ingredients in each vaccine, refer to the Canadian Immunization Guide, Part 1 – Key Immunization Information: Contents of Immunizing Agents Available for Use in Canada.

Reference:

National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI): Canadian Immunization Guide Chapter on Influenza and Statement on Seasonal Influenza Vaccine for 2016-2017.

What else do I need to know?

If you are looking for more information about influenza or any of the influenza vaccines, please contact Your Health Connection 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520, or visit our website at www.simcoemuskokahealth.org