



Injectable Influenza Vaccines for Children

(Fluzone® Quadrivalent, FluLaval Tetra®)

What is Influenza?

Influenza (“the flu”) is a potentially serious respiratory infection. Symptoms can include:

- sudden onset of fever, headache
- muscle aches, extreme weakness
- fatigue, chills, cough, runny eyes
- stuffy nose, sore throat

Children can also have earaches, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

Children with chronic conditions are at greater risk for more severe complications, such as pneumonia.

Most children will recover within 7-10 days, but symptoms such as cough and fatigue can last for several weeks.

Who should get this vaccine?

Children six months of age or older should get the flu vaccine, unless there is a medical reason why they cannot receive it.

Children younger than 9 years of age getting the influenza vaccine for the first time need two doses, at least four weeks apart.

Children are more susceptible to Influenza B. It is recommended that children receive quadrivalent influenza vaccine, which protects against 2 strains of Influenza B, while trivalent influenza vaccine protects against 1 strain of Influenza B.

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.

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 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 child’s body develops protection against influenza; protection may last up to one year.

Children 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 injectable flu vaccines?

Getting the flu vaccine is the best way to prevent influenza. FluMist® Quadrivalent is a nasal spray influenza vaccine that is also available publicly funded (free) in Ontario for those 2 through 17 years of age.

Other steps you can have your child take to prevent influenza infection include:

- Clean hands often
- Cover cough and sneeze
- Stay home when 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...	FluLaval Tetra®	Fluzone Quadrivalent®
Egg Protein	Eggs and egg products	√	√
Thimerosal	Eye solutions, Skin medications	√	√ *Not in pre-filled syringes

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 2018-2019.

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.