



# Nasal Spray Influenza Vaccine

## (FluMist® Quadrivalent)

### What is FluMist® Quadrivalent?

FluMist® is a nasal spray influenza vaccine, given by spraying 0.1ml into each nostril. It is a live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV), which means that the virus strains have been weakened so that they do not cause influenza.

### Who should get this vaccine?

This influenza vaccine is licensed in Canada for use in those 2-59 years old, however it is only publicly funded (free) in Ontario for children **2 through 17 year olds**.

Children less than 9 years of age getting the influenza vaccine for the first time are recommended to have two doses at least 4 weeks apart. This is the same for any influenza vaccine whether given by needle, or by nasal spray.

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?

The Canadian National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) reviewed all of the available studies from the last several influenza seasons. NACI no longer preferentially recommends FluMist® for children. It concluded that any available quadrivalent influenza vaccine (including FluMist®) can be used.

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 to get vaccinated every year.

Studies show 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 other illnesses that may be mistaken for influenza (i.e. stomach flu, cold).

### Is there an alternative to this vaccine?

Getting influenza vaccine is the best way to prevent the flu. An age appropriate injectable influenza vaccine is an alternative to receive FluMist®.

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 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 this vaccine have either no side effects or mild side effects such as nasal congestion or runny nose. 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 this vaccine?

- Children less than 24 months of age, due to increased risk of wheezing.
- 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. Effective 2016, NACI has concluded that people with egg allergy can safely receive LAIV.
- Those who have had GBS within 6 weeks of receiving a previous influenza vaccine
- Individuals with severe asthma
- Children under 18 years of age taking aspirin, or medicines containing aspirin.
- Pregnant women
- Anyone taking an anti-viral flu medication
- Individuals with a very congested nose.
- Anyone who is immunocompromised (due to condition or medication)
- Anyone with a fever or other illness/infection other than a cold.

Potential Allergen	Also found in...
Egg Protein	Eggs
Gentamicin	Antibiotics
Arginine	Almonds, dairy products, chicken
Gelatin	Cereal bars, protein drinks

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

## References

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](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org).