

# VACCINE FACTS

## Influenza

(FluLaval Tetra; Fluzone®  
Quadrivalent; Fluzone®  
High-Dose Quadrivalent; Flud®)

### Who should get this vaccine?

Everyone who is 6 months of age and older should get the flu vaccine 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 vaccine, as they have a higher risk of complications if they get influenza:

- People with underlying health conditions
- Residents of nursing homes/chronic care facilities
- People 65 years of age and older
- Children 6 months to 4 years of age (59 months of age)
- Pregnant individuals
- Indigenous peoples (6 months of age and older)

The flu vaccine is also strongly recommended for poultry industry workers.

It is also highly recommended that the following groups get the flu vaccine, as they can pass influenza on to those who are at high risk of complications:

- Health care providers
- Household contacts of individuals at high-risk of influenza related complications
- People providing regular care to children less than 5 years of age
- Members of a household expecting a newborn during the influenza season
- Those who provide services within a closed or relatively closed setting to persons at high risk of influenza related complications (e.g. crew on a ship)
- People who provide essential community services

### Which vaccine should I get?

| Age Group                  | Number of doses recommended  | Quadrivalent<br>Protect against two A strains and two B strains |                       | High-Dose Quadrivalent<br>Protects against two A strains and two B strains, but in higher doses. | Adjuvanted Trivalent<br>Protects against two A strains and one B strain; substance added to help improve immune response. |
|----------------------------|--|---|-----------------------|--|---|
|                            |  | FluLaval Tetra  | Fluzone® Quadrivalent | Fluzone® High-Dose Quadrivalent  | Flud®   |
| <b>6 months to 8 years</b> | Has previously received at least one flu vaccine in their lifetime: <b>1 dose.</b><br>Has not previously received flu vaccine in their lifetime: <b>2 doses, at least 4 weeks apart.</b> | ✓   | ✓                     |  |   |
| <b>9 years to 64 years</b> | <b>1 dose</b>  | ✓   | ✓                     |  |   |
| <b>65 years and older</b>  | <b>1 dose</b>  | ✓   | ✓                     | ✓  | ✓   |

Discuss with your health care provider which flu vaccine is best for you. All flu vaccines are effective – do not delay getting vaccinated if the vaccine you prefer is not available.

## How well does this vaccine work?

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

It takes about 2 weeks for the flu vaccine to be most effective in your body to fight influenza; protection may last up to 1 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, COVID-19).

## Is there an alternative to this vaccine?

Getting the flu vaccine is the best way to prevent influenza. 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 flu vaccine is capable of causing side effects, most of which are mild, like soreness, redness and/or swelling at the injection site. Other symptoms can include fever, headache, and feeling tired/weak. These side effects last only a few days. The risk of the flu vaccine causing serious side effects is extremely small. The risk of getting influenza and suffering serious complications is much greater. Life-threatening allergic reactions to the vaccine are extremely rare.

**Getting the flu vaccine will not increase your risk of COVID-19 illness.**

**Oculorespiratory Syndrome (ORS):**

During the 2000-2001 season, a small number of people who received the flu vaccine developed a side effect called Oculorespiratory

Syndrome. Symptoms included 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 the flu vaccine, with the exception of those who experienced severe lower respiratory symptoms (wheeze, chest tightness, difficulty breathing) within 24 hours of flu immunization. These individuals should seek expert medical advice before being immunized again with the flu vaccine. Since 2000-2001, fewer cases of ORS have been reported.

**Guillain-Barré Syndrome (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. You are more likely to develop GBS from influenza than from the flu vaccine. Studies have shown the risk of GBS after flu immunization is about 1 per million recipients.

## Who should NOT receive this 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 the flu vaccine.
- Those who have had GBS within 6 weeks of receiving a previous influenza vaccine.
- People who have experienced severe lower respiratory symptoms (wheeze, chest tightness, difficulty breathing) within 24 hours of a previous flu immunization should consult with their healthcare provider.

## What is in this vaccine?

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.

| Potential Allergen  | Also found in...                   | FluLaval Tetra               | Fluzone®<br>Quadrivalent     | Fluad® | High Dose<br>Fluzone® |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|--------|-----------------------|
| Egg protein         | Eggs                               | √                            | √                            | √      | √                     |
| Thimerosal          | Eye solutions; topical medications | √<br>(Multi-dose vials only) | √<br>(Multi-dose vials only) |        |                       |
| Neomycin; Kanamycin | Antibiotic Medications             |                              |                              | √      |                       |

**Can the vaccine be given to individuals when they are ill?**

Those with a severe acute illness with or without a fever should wait until the symptoms go away before being immunized.

### 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)

#### References:

1. Ontario. Ministry of Health. (2023/09/20). 2023/2024 Universal Influenza Immunization Program
2. National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI): Canadian Immunization Guide Chapter on Influenza and Statement on Seasonal Influenza Vaccine for 2023-2024.