

FluMist[®] Quadrivalent Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine

Public Health - Factsheet

Immunization has saved more lives in Canada in the last 50 years than any other medical intervention¹. Vaccines help your immunization system to recognize and fight bacteria and viruses that cause disease.

What is the flu?

The flu is a respiratory infection caused by a virus. Not everyone who gets the flu develops symptoms but they still may be able to spread it to others, especially if they cough or sneeze. It can spread easily from one person to another through coughing, sneezing or sharing food or drinks. You can also get the flu by touching objects contaminated with flu virus and then touching your mouth, eyes or nose.

It's important to practice good respiratory hygiene (cover your nose and mouth with your forearm or a tissue when you cough) and wash your hands often with soap and water or clean them with hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available, especially after coughing and sneezing.

The flu season in Manitoba usually begins in the fall and lasts into the spring. For your protection, you should get immunized early in the fall.

What is the FluMist vaccine?

The FluMist vaccine has been approved for use by Health Canada for the prevention of four strains of influenza virus. Every year, scientists monitor the global spread of flu and decide which four flu strains will likely cause the most illness during the flu season. Those four strains are then put into the flu vaccine so each year, the vaccine may be different.

It is important to get the flu vaccine every year because the viruses may change from year-to-year and the protection provided by the vaccine decreases over time.

FluMist is a live attenuated influenza vaccine that is made from weakened influenza viruses and is given as a nasal spray into both nostrils. Like other influenza vaccines, the vaccine does not protect against other viruses or bacteria that cause colds or stomach flu.

In addition to the live attenuated influenza vaccine, there are other inactivated influenza vaccines available in Manitoba. The inactivated vaccines are made of killed influenza viruses. All of the influenza vaccines available in Manitoba are approved by Health Canada. Talk to your health care provider about the vaccines that are available and which is right for you and your child.

Why should I get the flu vaccine?

Getting the flu vaccine every year is the best way to protect against seasonal influenza (the flu). When you get immunized, you also help protect others as well by reducing the spread of the influenza virus. This is especially important because some people are too young to get immunized or have medical conditions that prohibit them from getting immunized.

The flu can seem similar to a common cold, but the symptoms of the flu are usually more severe. Fever, body aches, extreme tiredness and a dry cough are more common with the flu than with a common cold. Also, the flu is more likely to lead to serious problems like pneumonia, bacterial infections and hospitalization.

What are possible side-effects of the FluMist vaccine?

The FluMist vaccine contains weakened influenza viruses and may cause mild influenza symptoms but it is much safer to get the vaccine than to get the flu. Health Canada approves vaccines based on a review of quality and safety.

Common reactions to the vaccine may include a runny nose and nasal congestion.

Less Common and Serious or Severe Adverse Events

Serious adverse events are rare following immunization. Allergic responses to influenza vaccines are a rare consequence of hypersensitivity to some vaccine components.

¹ Public Health Agency of Canada

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Other Reported Adverse Events and Conditions

Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS)

Recent studies suggest that the absolute risk of GBS in the period following seasonal and A(H1N1)pdm09 influenza vaccination is about one excess case per 1 million vaccinations and that the risk of GBS associated with influenza illness is larger than that associated with influenza vaccination.

Oculo-respiratory syndrome (ORS)

Oculo-respiratory syndrome (ORS), which is defined as the presence of bilateral red eyes plus one or more respiratory symptoms (cough, wheeze, chest tightness, difficulty breathing, difficulty swallowing, hoarseness or sore throat) that starts within 24 hours of vaccination, with or without facial oedema, was found during the 2000-2001 influenza season; few cases have been reported since then. ORS is not considered to be an allergic response.

Persons who have a recurrence of ORS upon revaccination do not necessarily experience further episodes with future vaccinations. Data on clinically significant adverse events do not support the preference of one vaccine product over another when revaccinating those who have previously experienced ORS. Refer to Other precautions and special considerations below for additional information.

ASA (Aspirin®) should NEVER be given to children because it can cause a severe liver and brain disease called Reye's Syndrome.

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine because there is a rare possibility of a severe allergic reaction. This can include hives, difficulty breathing or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. If this happens after you leave the clinic **call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department for immediate treatment.**

Who is eligible for the FluMist vaccine?

FluMist is free of charge to all children and adolescents two to 17 years of age, provided they do not have any of the conditions listed below. Children nine years of age and older need one dose of vaccine; children two to eight years of age who have never received a seasonal influenza vaccine need two doses. The second dose of

live attenuated influenza vaccine is important to raise their level of protection and should be given four weeks after the first dose.

Who should not get the FluMist vaccine?

- Children less than two years of age.
- Individuals with severe asthma, as defined as currently on oral or high dose inhaled glucocorticosteroids or active wheezing, or those with medically attended wheezing in the 7 days prior to immunization.
- Those who are pregnant.
- Children and adolescents with an immune system weakened by disease or medical treatment.
- History of severe allergic (anaphylactic) reaction to a previous dose of any type of influenza vaccine or any component of the live attenuated influenza vaccine.
- Those on long term Aspirin® treatment in the last four weeks.
- Those with a history of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) within six weeks of receipt of a previous dose of influenza vaccine without another cause being identified.
- Those with a history of Oculo-respiratory syndrome (ORS).

Other precautions and special considerations

If any of the following apply, please discuss with your health care professional prior to the administration of live attenuated influenza vaccine:

- History of severe oculo-respiratory syndrome (ORS)
 - red eyes and a cough and/or sore throat and/or hoarseness) after an influenza vaccine.
- Contact with someone who is severely immunocompromised and receiving care in hospital in a protected environment (ex: post bone marrow transplant).
- Currently on or received antiviral medications in the past two weeks.
- Require a tuberculosis (TB) skin test in the next four weeks.

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Your record of protection

Make sure your immunization provider updates your immunization record card or that of your child(ren), after you receive an immunization. Keep the card in a safe place! Your immunizations or those of your child(ren) will be recorded in Manitoba's immunization registry. This registry:

- o Allows the health care provider to find out which immunizations you or your child(ren) have had or need to have;
- o May be used to produce immunization records or notify you or your health care provider if a particular immunization has been missed;
- o Allows Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living and public health officials to monitor how well vaccines work in preventing disease.

If you need information on the immunizations that you or your child(ren) have received, contact your immunization provider. The Personal Health Information Act protects your information and/or that of your child(ren). You can have your personal health information and/or that of your child(ren) hidden from view from health care providers. For additional information please contact your local public health office to speak with a public health nurse. For a listing of public health offices please visit: <http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/offices.html>.

For more information on the flu or the flu vaccines:

- Talk to your immunization provider
- Call: Health Links-Info Santé in Winnipeg at 204-788-8200; toll-free elsewhere in Manitoba 1-888-315-9257
- Or visit Manitoba's Seasonal Influenza website at: <http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/flu/index.html>

Government of Canada website

<http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/diseases-conditions-maladies-affections/disease-maladie/flu-grippe/index-eng.php>