

Quadrivalent Influenza Vaccine Inactivated Influenza Vaccine (QIIV)

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?

Influenza (the flu) is a respiratory infection caused by a virus. Not everyone who gets the flu develops symptoms but they can still 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 or sneeze) and wash your hands often with soap and water or use a hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available, especially after coughing and sneezing.

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. The flu is more likely to lead to serious problems like pneumonia, bacterial infections and hospitalization.

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 flu vaccine?

There are many different strains of flu virus that circulate each year. The flu vaccine does not protect against all of them. 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 for that year so each year, the vaccine is different. For this reason and because protection provided by the vaccine decreases over time, it is important to get the vaccine every year.

The flu vaccine does not protect against other viruses or bacteria that cause colds or stomach flu. You cannot get the flu from the flu vaccine.

What is the inactivated influenza vaccine?

The quadrivalent inactivated influenza vaccine is inactivated. This means that the influenza viruses used to make the vaccine are killed during the manufacturing process. The vaccine is given by injection (needle). You cannot get the flu from the flu vaccine.

Why should I get the flu vaccine?

Immunization is the best way to protect you or your child(ren) against the flu which can often be serious and sometimes fatal. Vaccines help prepare your body to fight potential future exposure to the influenza virus by getting your immune system ready. The vaccine helps to protect you, your family and other people in your community from getting the flu.

This year, the flu vaccine will protect against four flu strains.

Possible side-effects of the flu vaccine

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 include pain, soreness, redness or swelling where the vaccine was given. Other symptoms are fever, headache and tiredness. Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) can be given for fever or soreness.

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.**

¹ Public Health Agency of Canada

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Other rare side-effects

In past flu seasons, some people experienced one or more of the following symptoms associated with Oculorespiratory Syndrome (ORS): red eyes, shortness of breath, chest tightness, cough, sore throat, or swelling of the face. These symptoms usually appeared within 24 hours of getting the flu vaccine and were gone within two days.

Seasonal flu vaccines have been associated with Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS), which is a form of paralysis that is usually temporary. It most commonly occurs after infection, but in rare cases can also occur in approximately one out of every million flu vaccinations.

Who should get the inactivated influenza vaccine?

Manitoba offers the seasonal flu vaccine free of charge to all Manitobans six months of age and older.

An annual flu vaccine is especially important for Manitobans at increased risk of serious illness from the flu, their caregivers and close contacts. Those at highest risk include:

- Seniors aged 65 years or older
- Residents of personal care homes or long-term care facilities
- Children six months to five years of age*
- Those with chronic illness such as:
 - an immune system weakened by disease or medical treatment
 - a condition that makes it difficult to breathe
 - cardiac or pulmonary disorders
 - children six months to adolescents 18 years of age on long term acetylsalicylic acid (ex: Aspirin®) therapy.
 - children, adolescents and adults with neurologic or neurodevelopmental conditions and other chronic medical conditions (ex: diabetes, renal disease, anemia, mental disabilities)
- Healthy pregnant women
- Health care workers and first responders
- Individuals of Aboriginal ancestry
- People who are severely overweight or obese

** Healthy children two to 17 years of age are able to be immunized against the flu with live attenuated influenza vaccine. Please see the FluMist® Quadrivalent Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine Factsheet for more information. <http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/flu/factsheets.html>*

Children six months to <9 years of age who have never received a seasonal flu vaccine need two doses. The second dose is important to raise their level of protection and should be given four weeks after the first dose.

Who should NOT get the inactivated influenza vaccine?

Talk to your health care provider if you or your child(ren) have had a severe allergic reaction after receiving a previous dose of this vaccine or any contents of the vaccine

Children under the age of 6 months should not receive the influenza vaccine.

Anyone with a high fever should not be immunized. The vaccine can still be given if the illness is mild, like a cold.

Speak to a public health nurse, pharmacist or doctor if you have had a serious reaction to a previous dose of any vaccine, including Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS), or if you have any severe allergies, including egg protein.

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:

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

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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 or 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 Program 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>

¹ Public Health Agency. Canadian Immunization Guide
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/cig-gci/p01-02-eng.php>