

INFLUENZA AND THE SEASONAL FLU VACCINE

Influenza is a respiratory virus that can spread easily from one person to another through coughing, sneezing or by touching your mouth, eyes or nose after coming into contact with objects contaminated with the virus.

The annual flu vaccine is offered free of charge to all Manitobans. However, the vaccine is particularly important for people who are at increased risk of serious illness from the flu, along with their caregivers and close contacts. This includes:

- seniors 65 years of age and older;
- residents of personal care homes or long-term care facilities;
- children six months to five years of age;
- individuals with chronic health conditions such as diabetes, anemia, obesity, cardiac or pulmonary disorders such as asthma;
- pregnant women;
- health-care workers and first responders;
- regular caregivers of children up to five years of age; and
- Indigenous people.

Manitobans over 65 should also get a pneumococcal (Pneu-P-23) vaccine at the same time as the flu vaccine. The vaccine helps protect against pneumococcal disease, blood infections and meningitis.

Both the flu and the Pneu-P-23 vaccine are offered at no charge for people aged 65 and older as well as to some people two years of age and older who are at increased risk of pneumococcal infection. Most people need only one dose of this vaccine in their lifetime.

In addition to getting immunized with a flu vaccine every fall, Manitobans can minimize the risk of getting or spreading seasonal flu by shielding their coughs and sneezes, staying home when they are sick and washing their hands regularly.

For more information about the flu, www.manitoba.ca/flu.