

## Influenza Surveillance

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## November 2019 CME Questions and Answers

### Q1. How many deaths were attributed to influenza in Ontario last year?

Complications from the flu can include serious conditions, like pneumonia, heart attacks and, in some cases, death.

According to NACI, there are approximately 12,200 hospitalizations and 3,500 deaths related to influenza on average each year in Canada. As Ontario represents 39% of the Canadian population, it is estimated that there would be an average of approximately 1,365 influenza-associated deaths per year in Ontario. The highest mortality rate typically occurs among adults 65 years of age and older.

### Q2. Have there been increased immunization rates since flu shots have been available at pharmacies?

The overall flu vaccinations in Ontario have been about the same over the past several years. Over 500 pharmacies in the City of Toronto provide flu vaccines. The vaccinations provided at Toronto pharmacies has increased over the years. Many grocery stores do have pharmacies that provide flu vaccine.

### Q3. How many lives do we expect to save in Ontario by using HD flu vaccine in seniors?

High dose flu vaccine provides better efficacy in seniors. A large randomized, double-blinded controlled clinical trial involving almost 32,000 individuals 65 years of age and over compared high-dose TIV to standard-dose TIV over two influenza seasons. The trial showed high-dose TIV to be 24.2% (95% confidence interval (CI): 9.7% to 36.5%) more efficacious compared to standard-dose TIV in preventing laboratory-confirmed influenza. The improved efficacy for high-dose TIV was particularly notable for A(H3N2), with high-dose TIV being 23.3% (95% CI: 6.0% to 37.5%) more efficacious. ([Ref](#))

### Q4. How much can a pharmacist bill for giving the flu shot? Isn't there a conflict of interest - why would they go out of their way to recommend that patients go to their MD/TPH clinic?

Pharmacist can bill the Ministry of Health per flu vaccine given. TPH has asked the Ministry to remind pharmacists that in providing informed consent for influenza vaccination, pharmacists should tell seniors that high dose vaccine is available at their doctor's office.

## **Frequently Asked Questions** (cont'd)

**Q5. If a child receives their first flu shot ever, but did not return for the second dose... what do you recommend for the next flu season? Do you give 2 doses to make up for the previous year or can you just give 1 dose/year?**

If a child has received at least one dose in a previous flu season, only one dose is required in the next or subsequent seasons.

**Q6. I was informed that the rates of heart attack and stroke were decreased by getting the flu vaccine. This is believable given the added demands on the heart and lungs caused by the flu. Are there good numbers for this? Enormous resources are spent on reducing heart attack and stroke. Why isn't flu vaccination part of the message?**

Yes, people with chronic health histories such as heart disease and respiratory conditions can see worsening of their conditions when infected with influenza. That is one of the reasons why people with pre-existing health conditions are considered high risk and told to receive the vaccine early in the season.

**Q7. If someone is on a course of antibiotics are they suitable to take the flu shot?**

If an individual is sick with a respiratory illness more serious than a cold, then it is probably okay to wait until they recover before providing the vaccine. This also ensures that worsening of their illness will not be incorrectly attributed to the vaccine. There are no medicines that are contraindications to receiving the flu vaccine.