



Updated October 2025

Influenza (Flu) Vaccine Fact Sheet

Fluviral, Fluzone®, Flucelvax®, Fluzone® HD-TIV, Fluad® TIV-adj

Influenza (Flu)

Influenza (flu) is a very contagious virus. The flu can spread through respiratory droplets, causing an infection of the nose, throat, and lungs. Symptoms include fever, sore throat, runny nose, cough, headache, muscle aches, feeling tired and loss of appetite. Vomiting and diarrhea can occur, especially in children. Some people are at greater risk of serious complications from flu including babies under two years old, pregnant individuals, older adults, and people with health conditions. In rare cases, the flu can lead to *Guillain-Barré Syndrome*, a neurological disorder.

Vaccine Benefits

The flu vaccine is safe, effective and the best way to protect yourself against getting very sick from the flu. Each year there is a new vaccine to try to match the strains that are expected to spread. It takes two weeks for your body to develop an immune response from the vaccine. How much protection the vaccine gives depends on a person's age and immune system. In general, flu vaccines are about 50 per cent effective in preventing flu illness in healthy adults. Studies have shown the flu vaccine lowers the risk of heart attack in those with heart disease.

Eligibility

Flu vaccination is recommended for everyone six months of age and older.

Children under the age of nine getting the flu vaccine for the first time need a second dose, given at least four weeks after the first dose.

Vaccines for Adults 65+

The flu can make older adults very sick. Two vaccines are approved for seniors to give better protection against the flu. A high-dose flu vaccine (Fluzone® HD-TIV or Fluad®TIV-adj) can give better protection for adults aged 65 and older. Both vaccines may cause more soreness, redness, and swelling where the vaccine was given, lasting a few days longer than the standard vaccine. If these vaccines are not available, do not delay getting vaccinated. All flu vaccines provide good protection.



Side Effects and Risks

It is much safer to get the flu vaccine than to get the flu. Flu vaccines are safe and well-tolerated. Side effects are usually mild and last a few days. Common side effects include pain, redness and swelling where the vaccine was given, headache, fever, muscle aches, joint pain or feeling tired. Side effects in children include irritability, drowsiness, or loss of appetite.

In rare cases, serious allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) can occur. Seek medical attention if you have trouble breathing, rash or swelling of the face and throat. Allergic reactions can be treated and are usually temporary. The risk of *Oculo-Respiratory Syndrome* or *Guillain-Barré Syndrome* after flu vaccination is very low, about one case in a million flu shots.

The flu vaccine cannot make you sick with the flu because it does not contain any live virus.

Precautions

Always tell your health care provider if you have allergies or if you have had side effects from a vaccine in the past. This vaccine is not for people with previous allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) to flu vaccine or who had *Guillain-Barré Syndrome* within six weeks after flu vaccination. People with a history of *Oculo-Respiratory Syndrome* can get the vaccine but should talk to their health care provider first.

Getting other vaccines at the same time

It is safe and convenient to get the flu vaccine at the same time, before or after a COVID-19 vaccine, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) immunization, and any other routine vaccines.

For more information

Talk to your health care provider or visit toronto.ca/immunization