

# Protect yourself and others from influenza (the seasonal flu)

Getting an influenza vaccine is the best way to protect yourself and others from influenza (the seasonal flu). The influenza vaccine is safe and available for free to everyone in Nova Scotia (6 months and older).

Influenza, commonly called “the flu” or “the seasonal flu,” is a contagious respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus. It affects the nose, throat and lungs.

The influenza vaccine is available for free to everyone in Nova Scotia (6 months and older). An enhanced influenza vaccine is available for free if you're 65 and older.

You can't get influenza from the vaccine.

It's safe to get both the influenza vaccine and COVID-19 vaccine at the same time.

The website [www.nshealth.ca/seasonal-vaccines](https://www.nshealth.ca/seasonal-vaccines) (<https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nshealth.ca%2Fseasonal-vaccines&data=05%7C02%7CJennifer.Churchill%40novascotia.ca%7C1c219ace2fda489eac6f08dcdb310f4%7C8eb23313ce754345a56a297a2412b4db%7C05>) will have all of the details including how to book vaccines for yourself and your family.

## Who should get an influenza vaccine

Everyone in Nova Scotia (6 months and older) is encouraged to get an influenza vaccine, especially people at high risk of complications.

People at high risk of complications include:

- Adults 65 and older – The immune system changes with age and this can make it harder for the body to fight off infections. People over 65 are also more likely to have health conditions that can get worse if they get the seasonal flu. It's recommended that adults 65 and older get an enhanced influenza vaccine (this provides a stronger immune response than the regular influenza vaccine). The enhanced vaccine is available for free to everyone in Nova Scotia (65 and older).
- Babies and children 6 months to 5 years – Because of their age, babies' and children's immune systems are still building immunity to fight off serious infections.
- Pregnant people – During pregnancy, the body goes through many changes that can make it harder for the body to fight off infections. People who get an influenza vaccine during pregnancy pass on immunity to their baby. Babies younger than 6 months can't get vaccinated against the seasonal flu. Getting an influenza vaccine can also help protect your baby from influenza after birth.
- Anyone with chronic conditions (like heart disease, asthma and diabetes) – These conditions can affect a person's immune system and make it harder to fight off infections.
- People at high risk of COVID-19 related illness – People at high risk of COVID-19 related illness should get an influenza vaccine. Getting an influenza vaccine reduces the risk of severe illness, which could happen when someone catches both COVID-19 and the seasonal flu.
- People who live or care for those at high risk of influenza-related complications or hospitalization – When healthcare workers and other care providers are vaccinated, their risk of illness decreases. The risk of death and other serious outcomes among the people in their care also decreases.

## Preventing influenza

To avoid getting and spreading influenza and other respiratory illnesses, you should:

- get your influenza vaccine
- stay home when you're sick
- wash your hands frequently or use hand sanitizer
- cough or sneeze into a tissue or your elbow
- avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- don't share drinking glasses, utensils, bottles, mouth guards or cosmetics
- disinfect surfaces (like touch screen surfaces, taps, doorknobs, countertops and other shared items)
- consider wearing a [non-medical mask](https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/masks/) (<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/masks/>) if you're around a lot of people

# Symptoms of influenza

Symptoms of influenza (the seasonal flu) include:

- high fever and chills
- headache
- general aches and pains
- fatigue and weakness
- runny or stuffy nose
- sneezing
- sore throat

The seasonal flu, a cold and [COVID-19 \(https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/symptoms-and-testing/#symptoms\)](https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/symptoms-and-testing/#symptoms) can have similar symptoms.

## Recovering from influenza

Most people recover from the influenza in 5 to 7 days.

If you think you have influenza, you should stay home, get plenty of rest and drink lots of clear liquids. You can also call [811 \(https://811.novascotia.ca/\)](https://811.novascotia.ca/) to speak with a nurse who can help you manage your symptoms and give you advice about whether you need to get additional care.


For some people, influenza can be serious. If you're at high risk of complications, or if your symptoms get worse or last a long time, you should contact your healthcare provider. Possible complications of the seasonal flu include pneumonia, worsening of chronic conditions and death.

## Related information

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) \(./coronavirus\)](#)
- [Flu \(influenza\): Symptoms and treatment – Health Canada \(https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/flu-influenza.html\)](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/flu-influenza.html)

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