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Flu (influenza): Get your flu vaccine (flu shot)

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Flu clinics across Canada offer free vaccines.

Get your flu vaccine

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Why get the flu vaccine

The flu vaccine is your best defense against the flu. The flu vaccine is recommended every year in the fall or winter, ideally before the flu season starts. Almost everyone who is at least 6 months of age should get a flu vaccine.

The flu vaccine protects you by:

- helping prevent serious flu-related complications
- reducing your chances of getting the flu at the same time as other respiratory illnesses, which could make you very sick
- protecting the health care system from becoming overwhelmed during respiratory illness season

The flu vaccine also helps protect people close to you because you're less likely to spread the flu to them if you're vaccinated.

In addition to vaccination, you can use personal protective measures to lower your risk of getting or spreading a respiratory illness like the flu, such as:

- staying home when sick
- wearing a well-fitting mask when appropriate
- cleaning your hands regularly

Learn more:

- [Complications of the flu](#)
- [Respiratory infectious diseases: How to reduce the spread with personal protective measures](#)

Getting the flu vaccine with other vaccines

People 6 months of age and older can get their flu vaccine:

- at the same time as other vaccines
- anytime before or after other vaccines

The flu and other respiratory illnesses are caused by different viruses. The flu vaccine won't protect you against any other illnesses, such as COVID-19 or respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). Keeping up to date with all recommended vaccinations will help protect you through the respiratory illness season.

If you have an upcoming vaccination appointment and have cold or flu symptoms, tell your health care provider ahead of time. If they advise you to keep the appointment, wear a well-fitting mask to help prevent spreading illness to others.

Learn more:

- [Flu clinics across Canada](#)
- [RSV: Symptoms and treatment](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccination: Book an appointment](#)

- [COVID-19: Symptoms, treatment, what to do if you feel sick](#)
- [Respiratory infectious diseases: How to reduce the spread with personal protective measures](#)

You need a flu vaccine every year

Every year, different strains of flu circulate during the flu season. In addition:

- flu viruses can change over time
- protection from the flu vaccine wears off over time

The World Health Organization studies worldwide trends and recommends the strains to be included each year in the annual flu vaccine.

Vaccination recommendations

Adults and children 9 years of age and older should receive 1 dose of flu vaccine each year.

Children from 6 months to less than 9 years of age who have **never had a flu vaccine** before should receive 2 doses. It's recommended that the interval between doses be at least 4 weeks apart during the current flu season.

Only 1 dose is needed for children 6 months to less than 9 years of age who **have been vaccinated** with 1 or more doses of the flu vaccine in any previous season.

It's especially important for some people to get the influenza vaccine, including those:

- who are at risk of severe illness
- at risk of spreading the flu to people at high risk of complications

Learn more:

- [Who is at most risk of getting the flu](#)

Effectiveness of the flu vaccine

It generally takes about 2 weeks for your flu vaccine to work.

The effectiveness of the vaccine can vary and may depend on:

- your health and age
- how well this year's vaccine matches this year's flu strains

Sometimes, the strains circulating in the population change while the vaccine is being produced. When this happens, the flu vaccine may not be as effective. However, if you've had your flu vaccine, you're still better protected than someone who hasn't been vaccinated.

Vaccine safety

Side effects after a flu vaccine are generally mild and go away on their own within a few days. You **cannot** get the flu from the flu vaccine. Severe reactions are very rare.

Learn more:

- [Vaccine safety video](#)
- [Vaccine safety poster](#)
- [Vaccine safety and possible side effects](#)

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