

Question: What is the flu (influenza) vaccine (“flu shot”)?

The flu shot protects against the flu virus. It is recommended for:

- anyone over 6 months old
- healthy people
- pregnant women
- anyone with a chronic medical condition

Question: Why should I get the flu shot?

The flu is a serious viral infection and people of any age can get it. Four thousand people in Canada, approximately 200 people in the Ottawa area, die each year from the flu. Getting vaccinated every year is the single, most effective way to prevent the flu.

Getting the shot helps to protect you and your family from the flu by preventing the virus from spreading. The only people who should NOT get the flu shot are:

- infants under the age of 6 months
- people who have had severe allergic reactions to any component in the flu shot (except eggs)
- people who have had a severe allergic reaction to a flu shot in the past

If you have a fever with respiratory symptoms, your health care provider will wait until your symptoms are gone before giving you the shot.

Question: Can I get the flu shot if I am allergic to eggs?

Yes, even if you have had a serious reaction to eggs in the past, it is safe to get your flu shot.

Question: If I got a flu shot last year, am I protected against the flu this year?

No, the flu virus changes from year to year, and your level of protection decreases over time.

Question: How safe is the flu shot?

Some flu shots contain a small amount of preservative – Thimerosal. No harmful effects have been reported from Thimerosal. There is no concrete evidence linking Guillain-Barré Syndrome to the flu shot. The risk of illness or death due to the flu is much greater. The flu shot does not cause the flu as it does not contain the live virus.

Vaccine Ingredients*:

Fluzone Quadrivalent: Egg protein, Formaldehyde

Fluzone Quadrivalent (High dose): Egg protein, Formaldehyde,
(Thimerosal - only in Multi-dose vials)

Flulaval Tetra: Egg protein, Formaldehyde, Polysorbate 80,
(Thimerosal - only in Multi-dose vials)

Fluad: Egg protein, Formaldehyde, Kanamycin, Neomycin

*This is not a complete list of ingredients- but includes most common allergens

Question: What should I be aware of after the flu shot?

The flu vaccine may cause minor side effects such as: discomfort, redness,

warmth or slight swelling where the needle went in; headache, tiredness or slight fever for a day or so. **Call 911 right away if you develop any serious signs or symptoms of an allergic reaction. Symptoms of a severe immediate allergic reaction include hives all over the body (bumps on the skin that are often very itchy), swelling of the face, tongue or throat, and wheezing or difficulty breathing.** It is important that you report any unusual or serious side effects to your family physician/nurse practitioner or vaccine provider.

Track Your Immunizations:

CANImmunize is a free digital application tool for Canadians that securely keeps your immunization records and helps you get your immunizations on time.

<https://www.canimmunize.ca/en/home>

Please ask your health care provider if you have any other questions.

