

For Immediate Release | October 12, 2017

Time to get the flu shot!

Every year in Canada, about 12,200 people are hospitalized and 3,500 people die from influenza or its complications.

You can help yourself and those around you stay healthy, prevent illness and potentially save lives in one easy step – by getting your annual flu shot. Interior Health advises that the flu shot is a safe and effective way to help protect the public, especially children, pregnant women, seniors, people with chronic illnesses, and others who are most at risk from influenza and its complications.



“Influenza, which people often call the flu, is sometimes confused with the common cold, the stomach flu (norovirus) or other illnesses caused by a virus,” said Dr. Rakel Kling, Medical Health Officer. “However, influenza is different – it is a serious infection of the airways that can be quite severe. It is highly contagious, and is among the top 10 leading causes of death in Canada.”

Influenza spreads when a person comes into contact with droplets from an infected person who coughs or sneezes. Symptoms can include fever, headache, runny nose, sore throat, or cough.

“The best ways to help protect yourself and those around you from influenza are to get immunized, wash your hands frequently, and to cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue. If you are sick, stay home, and keep sick children away from daycares and schools,” said Dr. Kling.

The flu shot provides protection from the influenza virus strains expected to be circulating this season based on worldwide trends identified by the World Health Organization. This year’s flu shot offers protection against two influenza A viruses (an H1N1 and an H3N2 virus) and one influenza B virus. For those under 18, the preferred vaccine also protects against an additional B influenza virus.

The flu shot is free for those at risk of complications from influenza and those in contact with people at risk. This includes:

- People 65 years and older and their caregivers/household contacts
- People of any age in residential care facilities
- Children and adults with chronic health conditions and their household contacts
- Children and adolescents (six months to 18 years) with conditions treated for long periods of time with Aspirin (ASA), and their household contacts
- Children and adults who are morbidly obese
- Aboriginal people
- All children six to 59 months of age
- Household contacts and caregivers of infants and children from birth to 59 months of age
- Pregnant women at any stage of pregnancy during the influenza season and their household contacts
- Visitors to hospitals, health centres and residential care facilities
- People who work with live poultry
- Health-care and other care providers in facilities and community settings who are capable of transmitting influenza disease to those at high risk of influenza complications
- People who provide care or service in potential outbreak settings housing high-risk persons (e.g., crews on ships)

- People who provide essential community services (first responders, corrections workers)

Interior Health's public clinics for those who are eligible for a free flu shot will begin in early November. The flu shot is also available at many doctor's offices, pharmacies and walk-in clinics - those who are not eligible for the free vaccine will be required to pay a fee.

To find an influenza immunization clinic or provider near you, watch for local announcements on dates and times in your community; or contact your local public health centre, physician office or pharmacy. You can also find a flu clinic near you by visiting the [Influenza Clinic Locator \(http://immunizebc.ca/clinics/flu\)](http://immunizebc.ca/clinics/flu) on the ImmunizeBC website.

Interior Health also reminds the public that during the influenza season visitors who have not had a flu shot are required to wear a mask when visiting Interior Health hospitals, health centres and residential care facilities, including contracted facilities. By following this policy, you will help to protect the people you are visiting from getting a potentially serious illness.

For more information, visit our website at www.interiorhealth.ca.

Interior Health is committed to promoting healthy lifestyles and providing a wide range of quality health-care services to more than 740,000 people living across B.C.'s vast interior. For more information, visit www.interiorhealth.ca, follow us on Twitter [@Interior_Health](https://twitter.com/Interior_Health), or like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/InteriorHealth.