



Influenza Vaccines Now Free of Charge in B.C. for Anyone Six Months of Age or Older



Help Fight Influenza in B.C. by Getting Immunized!

Everyone is at risk of getting influenza, which is also commonly referred to as the flu, and spreading it to others. While last year saw extremely low levels of influenza because of strict public health measures to control COVID-19, provincial health experts are noticing influenza and other respiratory illnesses starting to circulate in communities, as people spend more time indoors in cooler weather.

Influenza is an infection of the respiratory system (nose, throat, lungs) caused by the influenza virus. Compared to the common cold, influenza generally results in more severe illness with a sudden onset of headache, chills and cough followed rapidly by a fever, appetite loss, muscle aches and tiredness.

With COVID-19 still circulating in our communities, getting your influenza vaccine this year is especially important to protect you and those around you from getting sick. That is why the Province is offering influenza vaccines free of charge to everyone in B.C. six months of age or older during the 2021-22 influenza season.



Where Can I Get a Vaccine?

To make it as easy as possible, you can be immunized at most pharmacies, doctor's and nurse practitioner's offices and public health units. Visit ImmunizeBC's website to find [a flu clinic](#) near you.



Who should get an influenza vaccine?

Influenza immunization is recommended for everyone aged six months and older. It is especially recommended for those most at risk of severe illness and complications, and for those capable of transmitting the virus to high-risk people. Those at high risk of severe illness include people age 65 years and older, infants and very young children, pregnant people, Indigenous people, and children and adults with chronic medical conditions. Children under six months of age are too young to be vaccinated for influenza.



When is the best time of year to get an influenza vaccine?

Influenza infections typically occur from November/December through February/March.

The fall is the best time to get vaccinated, ideally before the virus starts circulating so you are protected for the entire influenza season.

Even if you don't get vaccinated in the fall, it is still strongly recommended you get vaccinated as soon as possible at any time in winter or early spring so you are protected for the remainder of the influenza season.



Is this year's vaccine effective?

The 2021-22 seasonal influenza vaccines are quadrivalent vaccines providing protection against four influenza strains. All of the influenza vaccines used in B.C. offer protection against two strains of influenza A and two strains of influenza B. Even when there is a less-than-ideal match or lower effectiveness against one virus, it still provides protection against the remaining viruses. Influenza vaccination can also reduce the severity of illness in people who get vaccinated but still happen to get infected.

This is why immunization is strongly recommended, especially for those who are at high risk of severe disease and influenza-related complications and hospitalization and those who can transmit the virus to those at high risk.



Can I get my COVID-19 and influenza immunizations at the same time?

Yes, influenza vaccine can be administered at the same time as, or any time before or after a COVID-19 vaccine.



What are the possible side effects of influenza vaccines?

Common reactions to the vaccine include soreness, redness and swelling where the vaccine was given. Other symptoms, that may last one to two days, can include fever, headache, muscle soreness, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and chills. Most of the time, the reactions are very mild and only last for a short period of time.

Learn More

Additional information on influenza and influenza vaccines can be found through [HealthLink BC](#).

We welcome your input and feedback. Contact us at: MOHNNewsletter@gov.bc.ca