



Fact Sheet:

Influenza Vaccine – Inactivated (Quadrivalent High Dose, Quadrivalent non-intranasal vaccine)

1. What is influenza?

Influenza is a contagious viral respiratory infection caused primarily by influenza A and B viruses. Symptoms typically include the sudden onset of fever, cough, muscle and joint pain. Other common symptoms include headache, chills, loss of appetite, fatigue, and sore throat. Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea may also occur, especially in children. About 10-20% of Canadians are infected with influenza each year. Most people will recover within a week to 10 days, but some people are at greater risk of severe complications, such as pneumonia. Influenza infection can also worsen certain chronic conditions, such as heart disease, lung disease, kidney disease and diabetes. Approximately 3,500 deaths occur annually in Canada due to influenza related illness and complications.

2. Who is recommended to receive the influenza vaccine?

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends influenza vaccine for **all** Canadians over 6 months of age, with particular emphasis on the following groups:

- People at high risk of severe disease, influenza-related complications, or hospitalization
- Adults and children with chronic health conditions, such as: cancer and other immune compromising conditions, diabetes, heart disease, lung disease, obesity, kidney disease, neurologic or neurodevelopment conditions, anemia or hemoglobinopathy).
- children 6 months to 18 years of age undergoing treatment for long periods with acetylsalicylic acid (ASA)
- people 65 years of age and older
- people who live in nursing homes or other long-term care facilities
- children under 5 years of age
- individuals who are [pregnant or those planning to become pregnant](#)
- Indigenous peoples
- People who can pass along the flu virus to those at high risk: care givers, health care providers, childcare providers, family and other household members.

The protection against influenza strains in the vaccine is obtained within 2-3 weeks after immunization and persists throughout the influenza season.

3. What is the inactivated influenza vaccine?

Inactivated influenza vaccine is a vaccine approved for use in persons aged 6 months and older. The vaccine contains inactivated strains of influenza A and B virus which are recommended each year for seasonal protection. Health care providers are advised of the products recommended by NACI for specific ages and populations.

4. What are the contents of inactivated influenza vaccine?

Inactivated influenza vaccines contain parts of inactivated (dead) virus proteins called antigens.

High- Dose vaccine contains four times the amount of antigen (the part of the vaccine that prompts the body to make antibody) contained in regular flu shots. The additional antigen is intended to create a stronger immune response (more antibody) in the person getting the vaccine.

Traces of non-medicinal ingredients are present to keep the product sterile and stable. The packaging does not contain latex and is considered safe for use in persons with latex allergies. The full list of contents of the vaccine is available in the product monograph which can be obtained from your health care provider.

5. What are the possible reactions to the inactivated influenza vaccine?

The most common side effects of the influenza vaccine are redness, pain, swelling and temperature at the site of injection. Some people may experience headache, muscle aches, fatigue, and fever. These reactions are generally mild and last 1-2 days. Other side effects may occur. Acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol) can relieve these symptoms. If symptoms persist for an extended period of time, contact your health care provider for an assessment.

In very rare instances a serious allergic reaction can occur requiring medical intervention from a health care provider. Your health care provider is able to quickly respond to this allergic reaction by administering adrenaline. This type of reaction mostly occurs within 15 minutes of receiving the vaccine. You will be asked to remain in the waiting room for 15 minutes after receiving your vaccination.

6. What are the situations in which inactivated influenza vaccine should not be given?

The vaccine should not be given to those:

- with history of severe allergic reaction or anaphylaxis to a previous dose or to any ingredient contained in the vaccine (except egg).
- less than 6 months of age.
- with history of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of a previous influenza immunization.
- Individuals who have experienced Oculorespiratory syndrome (ORS) with lower respiratory tract symptoms without review.
- with serious acute febrile illness at the time of the appointment; they may return when their symptoms have resolved.

7. What are the risks if influenza vaccine is not received?

The risk of contracting influenza illness and of spreading it to others is increased when influenza vaccine is not received. Transmission of influenza illness contributes to increased hospitalization and prolonged illness, particularly in those who are more vulnerable.