

Protecting Yourself with Flu Vaccines



Canadian
Immunocompromised
Advocacy Network

What immunocompromised* people should know.

What is the flu?

Influenza (commonly known as the flu) is caused by a group of viruses that can infect the lungs, throat, and nose. It spreads through the air when people breathe, talk, cough, or sneeze, and by touching contaminated surfaces and then touching the eyes, nose, or mouth.

For people with weakened immune systems, the flu can cause severe illness, hospitalization, negative long-term health outcomes, and even death.²



Did you know?

Infected people can spread the flu even before they notice any symptoms.¹

What are the symptoms of the flu?²

The most common symptoms include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Body aches and chills
- Fatigue
- Vomiting or diarrhea

Who is at risk for severe flu?²

- People with weakened immune systems
- People with chronic medical conditions (e.g., lung or heart disease, diabetes)
- Older adults (65+)
- Adults living in congregate living settings (e.g., long-term care, nursing homes, assisted living)
- People who are pregnant

Flu vaccines can help prevent severe illness

The vaccine works by showing part of the flu virus called an “antigen” to the immune system, teaching the body how to defend against the virus.

The vaccine is updated each year to protect against the most common strains of the virus. If you’ve skipped a flu vaccine in past years, that’s okay—it’s never too late to start protecting yourself.

It is recommended that immunocompromised people receive the flu vaccine each year to stay protected.³

The flu is different and much more serious than the common cold.

With a cold, symptoms are usually milder.⁴

Regular flu vaccines⁴

Who is it for?

All ages

How does it work?

Contains a standard amount of antigen to protect people under 65 years from severe illness.

Enhanced flu vaccines⁵

Who is it for?

Adults 65 years and older

How does it work?

Some flu vaccines are designed to give the immune system extra support and may offer stronger protection than standard vaccines.

These enhanced vaccines include:

- High-dose vaccines, which contain more antigen
- Adjuvanted vaccines, which include an added ingredient that strengthens the immune response
- Recombinant vaccines, which are made using a small, lab-created piece of the virus

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? How can I access the flu vaccine?

Each province has its own publicly funded flu vaccine program.

Find the most up-to-date information about your region's program below, including where you can go to get the vaccine near you:

- [Alberta](#)
- [British Columbia](#)
- [Manitoba](#)
- [New Brunswick](#)
- [Newfoundland & Labrador](#)
- [Northwest Territories](#)
- [Nunavut](#)
- [Ontario](#)
- [Prince Edward Island](#)
- [Quebec](#)
- [Saskatchewan](#)
- [Yukon](#)

You can get your flu vaccine at most pharmacies, walk-in clinics, or through your family doctor.

Talk to your healthcare team about which protection option is the best for you.



i Did you know?

Vaccines are an important tool and they work best when combined with other strategies, like masking, ventilation, and staying home when sick.

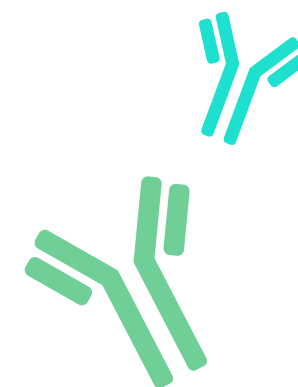
Wear a high quality and well-fitting mask (e.g., N95 or equivalent) for added protection against influenza and other respiratory illnesses.⁶

References

*Immunocompromised is a term used to describe a weakened immune system that can be caused by a variety of medical conditions and drug treatments

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This resource was developed in January 2026 and reflects information available at that time.



This resource was developed in partnership with people who have lived experience.

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