**What is the flu?**

“The flu,” more properly known as seasonal influenza, is a common contagious infection. The flu affects the nose, throat, and lungs. It is spread through droplets that have come from someone who has the flu through their cough or sneeze. You can get the flu by shaking hands with someone who has the flu or by touching surfaces that have come into contact with flu droplets, and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Flu symptoms include a sudden fever or feeling feverish as well as a cough and/or a sore throat. It is common to also have a runny or stuffy nose, head- or body-aches, and chills.  You may feel more tired than usual and have a lower appetite. Some people (mostly children) also have nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea. According to the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, there are approximately 3,500 deaths related to influenza on average each year in Canada.

**Why should I get vaccinated?**

You can help protect yourself against the flu by getting your flu vaccine. The earlier you get the vaccine, the better your chances are to prevent getting the flu. The flu is a viral infection that can have severe complications. Anyone can get the flu virus. The flu is not just a cold. You could miss school, work, parties, holidays, or even end up in the hospital.

The flu vaccine helps your body help itself. The vaccine will trigger your body to fight off infection if you come into contact with the flu. This means you either will not get the flu, or the symptoms will be greatly reduced. Each year, different strains of the flu virus appear. Scientists predict which strains will be most likely to affect us for the coming year. These strains are used to make up the year's flu vaccine. This is why it is important to be immunized each fall.

Getting your flu vaccine is good for everyone. When more people get their flu vaccine, the odds of the flu virus spreading goes down. This protects those who are most vulnerable such as children under five, adults 65 years or older, pregnant women, as well as those living with chronic health conditions like diabetes, cancer, and HIV/AIDS.

**What else can I do to prevent the flu?**

In addition to getting your flu vaccine, you can help stop the spread of the flu, and protect yourself & your family by following a few easy steps:

* Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer.
* Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
* Cover your coughs and sneezes with your arm, not your hand.
* If you are sick, stay at home
* Do not visit hospitalized patients or residents of retirement homes or long-term care homes if you are experiencing flu-like symptoms.

**What will the flu season look like this year?**

For updates on flu surveillance in LGL, visit: <https://healthunit.org/for-professionals/hospitals-ltc-retirement-homes/outbreak-management-resources/outbreak-status-report/>

**Where can I get my flu vaccination?**

It is easier than ever to get your flu vaccine. Anyone aged six months and older who lives, works or attends school in Ontario is eligible to receive the publicly funded flu vaccine.

You can get your flu vaccine from:

* Your primary care provider or family doctor
* Your local pharmacist
* (INSERT LOCAL HU CLINICS HERE)

**When will vaccine be available?**

In LGL, flu vaccine is scheduled to be delivered to hospitals, health care providers and long term care homes for high risk patients by Oct 21st and a second delivery for Oct 29th.

**What flu vaccines are available this year?**

This year’s flu vaccines for children and adults protect against four different flu viruses: two influenza A viruses (A/H1N1 and A/H3N2) and two influenza B viruses (B/Colorado and B/Phuket). This is a quadrivalent influenza vaccine.

Babies and children 6 months to under 9 years of age who have never had a flu shot will need 2 doses of the vaccine, given at least 4 weeks apart. Everyone else will need only one dose.

Flumist® Quadrivalent, a live attenuated quadrivalent influenza vaccine given as a nasal spray, **will not** be available in Canada for the 2019/2020 influenza season.

A high-dose flu vaccine is also available for adults 65 years of age and older protecting against three different flu viruses: two influenza A viruses (A/H1N1 and A/H3N2) and one influenza B virus (B/Colorado).  This is a high-dose trivalent vaccine.  If you are 65 years old or older, your doctor can help you choose between the quadrivalent influenza vaccine and the high-dose trivalent vaccine.

**Is the flu vaccine safe?**

The flu vaccine is safe for anyone 6 months of age or older who does not have a contraindication to the flu vaccine.

Flu vaccine is contraindicated in persons who had an anaphylactic reaction to the flu vaccine or to a component of the flu vaccine before. If you had an anaphylactic reaction to a flu vaccine before, a consultation with an allergist is recommended prior to flu vaccination. Persons with egg allergy can safely receive any influenza vaccine and do not need any special precautions or testing.

**How do I know the difference between a cold and the flu?**

Many people confuse the terms “cold” and “flu.” Influenza (flu) is a respiratory viral infection that can lead to severe complications. The flu is not just a cold. You could miss school, work, parties, holidays, or even end up in the hospital. Below is a list of common symptoms of the flu compared with a common cold.

Link to chart

**What can I do to ease my symptoms if I have the flu?**

If you have flu-like symptoms, including a fever, a cough, severe headache and/or chills, be sure to:

* Rest.
* Drink lots of fluids.
* Take basic pain or fever relievers if needed.

**When should I contact the doctor or go to the emergency room?**

Contact your doctor if symptoms are severe and do not improve after a few days.

Use this resource to help you identify your symptoms: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/flu-influenza.html>

**When is it too late to get vaccinated?**

As long as flu is still circulating in the community and there is still flu vaccine available from your health care provider, you should get vaccinated.