

“Influenza immunization and careful handwashing are the best ways to prevent influenza.”

The Medical Health Officer answers your questions

Question:

Is seasonal influenza a serious disease?

Answer:

Yes. Seasonal influenza is a serious disease caused by a virus. It is much worse than the common cold and it is not the ‘stomach flu’. Seasonal influenza can cause serious illness and may result in pneumonia and death.

Question:

Does the seasonal influenza vaccine protect me from H1N1 influenza (2009 pandemic strain)?

Answer:

One of the strains in the seasonal influenza vaccine is a California (H1N1) – the 2009 pandemic strain.

Question:

I had the pandemic H1N1 vaccine in 2009. Do I need the seasonal influenza vaccine this year?

Answer:

Yes. The pandemic H1N1 vaccine you received in 2009 will no longer provide protection. The seasonal vaccine will provide immunity against the 2009 pandemic influenza virus and offer protection against two additional strains of influenza.

Question:

Who should get seasonal influenza vaccine?

Answer:

Publicly funded seasonal influenza vaccine will be available free of charge through public health clinics and physician clinics to any individual who wants to receive it, however it is especially encouraged for high risk groups.

These high risk groups include:

- any resident with a chronic health condition or severe obesity;
- adults 65 years of age and older;
- children aged 6 months to under 5 years of age;
- pregnant women in any trimester;
- residents of a nursing home or other care facility;
- household and close contacts of infants, pregnant women and individuals at high risk;
- occupational groups likely to get or transmit influenza due to the nature of their activity (i.e. child and healthcare providers, people working with poultry and/or swine).

Question:

Is the seasonal influenza vaccine safe?

Answer:

Yes. The vaccine has been proven safe. It helps your immune system make antibodies to fight this year’s seasonal influenza virus. The belief that once you start getting the vaccine you cannot stop is not true. The reason that you need to be immunized each year is because the virus and the vaccine may change each year.

Question:

Can you get seasonal influenza from the vaccine?

Answer:

No. The vaccine does not contain live viruses. Therefore, it cannot cause influenza.

Question:

How does the vaccine help?

Answer:

The vaccine prevents seasonal influenza in 70% of healthy people who are immunized. For most others, it reduces the seriousness of the disease. The vaccine does not prevent the common cold.

Question:

Does the vaccine cause reactions?

Answer:

The vaccine we use has few side effects. Most people have no reaction at all. Moderate or severe reactions are rare. Some may have a little soreness in the arm. For more information, talk to a public health nurse or your doctor.

Question:

Is it true that I can have influenza without symptoms and that I could still spread the disease to others?

Answer:

Yes. You may have influenza without becoming ill. You could still spread the disease to family, friends and co-workers.

-
- *This fall, more than 45,000 people in the Region will be immunized against seasonal influenza.*

- *Seasonal influenza vaccine is provided at doctors’ offices and other convenient locations in the community.*

FIGHT