

## The Flu: Nothing to Sniff At

### What is the flu?

The flu is a highly contagious virus that causes respiratory infections that affect the nose, throat, and lungs. The flu season usually lasts from November to April. People are usually sick for one week, but in some cases, especially in infants and young children, pregnant women, people with chronic diseases, (such as diabetes and asthma), and the elderly, the flu can lead to serious complications such as pneumonia.

### What can I do to avoid the flu?

You are a valuable ally in the fight against the flu. There are many things you can do.

1. Get the flu shot. It not only protects you, it protects those around you as well.
2. Wash your hands often.
3. Cough and sneeze into your arm, not your hands. Hands touch everything and infections spread quickly through touch.
4. Clean and disinfect common surfaces often. These include doorknobs/handles, light switches, telephones, kitchen and bathroom counters, computer keyboards, etc. Some viruses and bacteria can live on surfaces for up to 48 hours.
5. If you get sick, stay home. Going to work or school can spread the illness to those you encounter.
6. Stay healthy. Regular physical activity and healthy eating are an excellent defence against illness.

### Did you know?

Millions of Canadians are infected with the flu every year. It is believed that more than 2,000 Canadians, mostly seniors, children, and those with chronic health problems, die each year from the flu. The flu shot can prevent flu illness in up to 70 to 90 per cent of healthy children and adults.

### **I have asthma. Should I get a flu shot?**

Yes. Almost everyone should get a flu shot. It will protect you from the virus, but it will also protect your family, your friends, and your community. If you do not get the flu, you cannot pass it on to others.

People who should not get the flu shot are:

- 1) Infants under six months of age
- 2) Anyone who is really ill with a fever
- 3) Anyone who has developed the Guillain-Barre Syndrome or Oculorespiratory Syndrome within eight weeks after vaccination. (Speak to your health-care provider.)

**Please note:** Anyone with allergies to Thimerosal and/or Neomycin/Kanamycin should advise their health care provider, as accommodations can be made.

### **Can I get the flu from the flu shot?**

No! The flu shot does not contain any live viruses so you cannot get the flu from the vaccine. If you become ill following the vaccine, it is possible that you were already exposed to a cold or the flu and would have been sick regardless of the shot.

### **I have had a COVID vaccine. Do I still need a flu shot?**

Yes! COVID and the flu are caused by different viruses.

### **Where should I go to get the flu shot?**

The flu shot will be available from a number of locations:

- 1) Queen's Family Health Team (QFHT): flu shot information and clinic dates are posted on the QFHT website. Visit [qfht.ca](http://qfht.ca)
- 2) KFL&A Public Health: Visit [kflaph.ca](http://kflaph.ca)
- 3) Many pharmacists now provide the vaccine. Call your pharmacy to see if it will be providing the shot to its patients. Please let us know if you receive your flu shot elsewhere!