

# Influenza

## What is Influenza (Flu)?

Influenza is a highly contagious, common respiratory illness that affects millions of Canadians every year. Influenza season generally starts in November and lasts until April. Anyone can get influenza, but for some people it can be serious or even life threatening. Getting an annual influenza vaccination can help prevent an infection or reduce the severity of the illness.

## How is it spread?

The influenza virus spreads through droplets that have been coughed or sneezed into the air by someone who has influenza. The flu virus is also found on the hands of people with the flu and on surfaces they have touched. You can become infected if you shake hands with infected persons or touch contaminated surfaces and transfer the virus to your own eyes, nose or mouth.

## How do I know if I have it?

The symptoms of influenza may include a sore throat, cough, runny nose, fever, chills, fatigue, headache, body aches and pains. People with influenza often are bedridden for up to 7-10 days. Influenza can result in serious complications such as pneumonia, kidney failure and a variety of nervous system disorders, in some cases these complications are life-threatening. It is estimated that each year 5,000 Canadians die from influenza and pneumonia.

## Can I protect myself from getting the flu?

**YES!** An *influenza vaccination each year* in the fall is the single most effective means of preventing or minimizing the disease. Some adults and children are at greater risk of getting flu-related complications, and should receive the vaccine. This includes those with:

- Chronic heart, lung or kidney disorders
- Diabetes, asthma, severe chronic anemia, cancer or other chronic illness
- Persons age 65 years of age or older
- Children and adolescents (6 months to 18 years) with conditions treated for long periods with acetylsalicylic acid (ASA)

Most people have little or no reaction to the vaccine. For those persons who do, the side effects are mild and may include soreness where the shot was given. A few persons report a fever and muscle ache within 1 or 2 days. Influenza **vaccine should not be given** to anyone with a serious allergy to eggs or any component of the vaccine or anyone who has had a previous serious reaction to the vaccine in the past.

## What should I do if I get the Flu?

- Stay at home until fever free for 48 hours
- Practice good hand washing (soap and water for at least 15 seconds)
- Practice respiratory etiquette - cough or sneeze into your sleeve or use a tissue
- Rest and take extra fluids

*This fact sheet provides basic information only. It must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a health care professional about any health concerns.*

For further information contact the Infectious Disease Program at 625-8318  
or toll free 1-888-294-6630, ext. 8318.

Influenza, ID-FS-NON-107  
February 2016

999 Balmoral Street, Thunder Bay, ON P7B 6E7  
Phone: (807) 625-5900 | Toll-free: 1-888-294-6630  
TBDHU.COM



Thunder Bay District  
Health Unit