



Options for parents: Flu Shot or FluMist?

The CDC recommends that children and teens should start getting their flu vaccine in September, or once the vaccine becomes available.

As we prepare for this year's flu season, parents should remember that they now have more options. They can choose either a flu shot or FluMist—the nasal spray flu vaccine. This is FluMist's second year in Canada and it's gaining popularity for both children over 2 years of age and for adults up to 59. What is it?

- Gentle mist that is administered intra-nasally
- Preservative free, adjuvant free and the sprayer is latex free
- It's needle free!
- Since 2003, more than 27 million doses of FluMist have been manufactured and distributed in the U.S

Contact We Care to learn more about FluMist.

FLU affects the bottom line!



According to the Canadian Coalition for Immunization Awareness and Promotion, the flu costs the Canadian economy about a half a billion dollars each year. From a million hospital-bed days per year to \$500 million in medical costs, the flu presents a considerable burden, not just on the healthcare system but on the economy as a whole.

Consider the dollar costs to the workplace in increased employee sick time, short-term disability and decreased productivity. Not to mention that the flu can result in recovery times of up to six weeks, causing an amplified workload and increased stress levels for other employees.

Workplace immunization clinics are an excellent way to encourage employees to get vaccinated. They present a comprehensive and cost-efficient tool for reducing flu risk throughout the season, which lasts from October through April.

While immunization isn't free in all provinces, flu clinics pay for themselves within a few months. According to Health Canada, research shows that workplace immunization programs provide employers with a return on

investment of more than \$60 for each worker vaccinated.

Lower absenteeism and increased productivity are just two of the reasons why vaccination clinics are such a great investment. In addition, bringing immunization right into the work environment demonstrates a company's concern for the overall wellbeing of its employees. Vaccination clinics can also improve morale and the quality of life of workers and their families.

Did you know?

Check out these resources for more information on the flu. The more you know, the easier it will be to make well-informed decisions and good choices.

- www.hc-sc.gc.ca
- www.phac-aspc.gc.ca
- www.fightflu.ca
- www.wecareohs.com

Flu-free at work

This fall, workplaces can help employees and their families by organizing flu immunization clinics during regular business hours. These clinics allow people to receive their shot without having to take extra time away from work. Consider setting a percentage goal of vaccinated employees to encourage them to get their immunization and further promote awareness. After all, a healthy worker makes for a healthier bottom line.

Beat the bug!

The flu affects 10–25% of Canadians each year. While the majority who become sick recover, the flu results in an average of 20,000 hospitalizations and 2,000–8,000 deaths in Canada alone. In fact, it's the sixth leading cause of death in the country. The flu is highly contagious and spreads very quickly through the following routes:

- Through the air via droplets (e.g., sneezing)
- Via direct person-to-person contact
- Via direct contact with contaminated objects (the flu can persist in dried mucus for hours)

There are a number of smart actions you can take to avoid the flu—but getting vaccinated each year in October or November, prior to the flu season, is the first and most important step.

While staying flu-free is a good idea for all of us, for some individuals getting a flu shot is critical. Higher priority people include:

- ✓ Children aged six to 23 months
- ✓ Adults and children with chronic heart and lung disease
- ✓ Anyone living in a nursing home or chronic care facility
- ✓ People aged 65 years and older
- ✓ People with chronic conditions such as diabetes, anemia, cancer, immune suppression, HIV infection or kidney disease
- ✓ Children and adolescents on long-term acetylsalicylic acid (ASA) therapy



- ✓ Healthcare workers, other caregivers and household contacts capable of transmitting the flu to the above at-risk groups

A small portion of the population, however, is cautioned against getting vaccinated. This includes children younger than six months and people who have had a severe allergic reaction to eggs, chicken or to a previous dose of the vaccine.

The most common side effect is soreness at the injection site, which may last a couple of days. You may also notice fever, fatigue and muscle aches within six to 12 hours after your shot, which may last a day or two.

Simply put—the most effective way to protect yourself and your loved ones from flu viruses, including the H1N1 flu virus, is to get immunized. The financial cost of immunization is outweighed by the health and quality of life benefits. And, as the old adage goes, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!”

Prevent the spread!

Take the following steps to control the spread of the flu virus and other infectious diseases:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water, or use hand sanitizer
- Cough and sneeze into your arm or sleeve
- Keep common areas and shared items clean and disinfected
- Keep doing what you normally do, but stay home if you are sick
- Talk to a health professional if you experience severe flu-like symptoms

You can access current, updated information through your local public health office or by calling WeCare™ Home Health Services at 1-877-853-1195.

Most of this information has been adapted from the Health Canada website, www.hc-sc.gc.ca.

Get the dirt on clean hands

Washing your hands is the single most important thing you can do to prevent the flu. Here are some tips to ensure effective hand washing:

1. Wet your hands and wrists with warm water
2. Apply one or two pumps of soap to your palm
3. Lather the soap and scrub your hands well—make sure you scrub your fingertips, backs of hands and wrists and between your fingers
4. Rinse thoroughly under running water
5. Pat your hands dry with towels
6. In public washrooms, use a paper towel to turn off the water and to open the door of the washroom when leaving
7. Remember to wash your hands before preparing or eating food, after using the washroom and when your hands are visibly soiled; hand sanitizers can be used at other times for effective handy hygiene



Vaccine news

The Public Health Agency of Canada has some good news: This year the regular seasonal influenza (flu) vaccine will also contain a H1N1 flu strain similar to the pandemic strain.

