



Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

H1N1 Flu Vaccine - Seasonal Flu Vaccine

Bust Those Myths and Beat the Flu

The best defense against H1N1 flu and seasonal flu is to get immunized. Protect yourself and those around you. You can be confident that vaccines are authorized for use by Health Canada after undergoing rigorous review to ensure their safety and efficacy.

Myth 1

I didn't get a flu shot last year and I didn't get sick.

Fact: This year, it's a different flu season. The pandemic H1N1 flu virus is a new strain of influenza – people have little to no immunity against it. More people are sick this year from the flu than in the past five flu seasons. Even though you have avoided getting the flu so far, it does not mean that you will not get sick. Experts estimate that at least one out of three people are still susceptible to the H1N1 flu. It is also a good idea to get immunized against seasonal flu as a precaution against seasonal flu strains that may begin to circulate later in the flu season. By getting immunized, you decrease your chances of becoming ill.

Myth 2

I'm young and healthy. I don't need a flu shot.

Fact: Even healthy children and young adults can become seriously ill. Almost half of the people hospitalized from H1N1 have been under the age of 24. On average, the flu can leave you ill for up to seven days and even mild cases of H1N1 can impact you significantly. Sharing personal items like cell phones, eating utensils, pens and drinks contribute to the spread of H1N1 infection. Proper personal hygiene and environmental cleaning can reduce the risk of spread.

Myth 3

I don't need another flu shot. I got one last year.

Fact: The H1N1 flu virus is a new influenza strain – people have little or no immunity against it. Last year's flu vaccine will not provide protection against the H1N1 flu virus or this year's seasonal flu. Each year, different types of seasonal flu circulate and a new vaccine is produced annually that provides protection against the most common flu strains predicted for the coming season. Protection by the vaccine develops within two weeks after you have been immunized, and may last up to one year.

Myth 4

You should not get the flu shot if you are pregnant.

Fact: While pregnant women are no more likely to get the flu than the rest of the population, they are more likely to develop complications from an influenza infection. This is because during pregnancy, their immune system is suppressed. Pregnant women, especially those in the second and third trimesters, and women up to six weeks after delivery are at a higher risk of developing complications, such as pneumonia, from influenza. Flu shots are safe and recommended for all pregnant women.

Myth 5

Getting the flu shot will give me the flu.

Fact: This is simply not true. The vaccine does not contain any ingredients that would cause the flu and therefore the shot cannot give anybody the flu. Protection by the vaccine develops within two weeks after you have been immunized, and may last up to one year. At the time of year (fall and winter) that the vaccine is administered, many cold viruses cause illness. The presence of a cold may be mistaken for a reaction to the flu vaccine. The vaccine does not protect against regular cold viruses.

Myth 6

The flu is just a bad cold.

Fact: The flu can be much worse than a cold. Colds do not generally result in serious health problems such as pneumonia whereas it is possible to get pneumonia from the flu. Below are some differences between the cold and the flu:

Symptom	Cold	Influenza
Fever	Rare	Usual; high fever (102 ° F/39 ° C - 104 ° F, 40 ° C), sudden onset, lasts 3 to 4 days.
Headache	Rare	Usual; can be severe
Muscle aches and pains	Sometimes, generally mild	Usual; often severe
Tiredness and weakness	Sometimes, generally mild	Usual; severe, may last up to 2 to 3 weeks

Extreme tiredness	Unusual	Usual; early onset, can be severe
Runny, stuffy nose	Common	Common
Sneezing	Common	Sometimes
Sore throat	Common	Common
Chest discomfort, coughing	Sometimes, mild to moderate	Usual, can become severe.
Complications	Can lead to sinus congestion or infection, and ear aches.	Can lead to pneumonia and respiratory failure, and become life-threatening. Can worsen a chronic condition.

Myth 7

Flu shots aren't worth getting because they're not very effective.

Fact: The H1N1 flu shot is a perfect match to the virus. Studies show that it results in an extremely strong immune response. The seasonal flu shot is typically about 70 to 90 per cent effective in preventing the flu in healthy children and adults, when the vaccine is a good match to the influenza types circulating that flu season.



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What should I get?

Should I get the H1N1 flu shot even now? *YES because...*

- Flu season is far from over. Flu activity is expected to continue throughout the winter.
- More people have been sick this year from the flu compared to the past five flu seasons.
- An estimated one out of three Ontarians remain susceptible to the H1N1 flu
- Almost 50% of those hospitalized with H1N1 to date were younger than 24 years old.
- The H1N1 flu vaccine is safe and effective. It is one of the best flu vaccines we've ever had -- a perfect match to the circulating pandemic flu strain.

Should I get the seasonal flu shot? *YES because...*

- The dominant flu strain circulating in the province has been the pandemic H1N1 flu. However, no one knows whether seasonal flu will begin circulating.
- Getting the seasonal flu shot is a precaution to provide further protection. As cases of H1N1 decrease, there is a possibility that seasonal flu may begin to circulate later in the flu season.
- Ontario is one of very few places in the world that offers free seasonal flu immunization to its residents.
- In the past, seasonal flu has resulted in approximately 19,000 hospitalizations every year in Ontario, as well as 300 deaths annually.
- Those at greatest risk from seasonal flu – and are strongly encouraged to get the seasonal flu shot - include
 - children 6-23 months old
 - persons 65 years of age and older
 - pregnant women
 - adults and children with chronic health conditions
 - heart or lung disease
 - diabetes
 - cancer and other conditions that compromise the immune system
 - kidney disease
 - diseases of the blood
 - long-term treatment with aspirin (children and adolescents only)
- Family members and those who provide care to the above listed are also strongly advised to get vaccinated against seasonal flu to protect themselves and those around them.

NOTE: The two vaccines can be safely and effectively administered at the same visit, on different limbs.