

# Information Sheet

## Cold and Flu Program 2019/2020



As in past years, the influenza, or “flu”, vaccine is once again available, free of charge, to any individual engaged in the operational activities of the BC Public Service during flu season. The flu clinic program makes getting vaccinated convenient for employees by offering clinics at or near employees’ worksites during the work day.

### About the Flu

The flu is a common upper respiratory illness that is highly contagious. Common symptoms include fever, body aches, headache, fatigue, runny nose, loss of appetite, cough or sore throat. Fever and other symptoms usually last seven to ten days, with the cough and weakness lasting up to two more weeks. The flu spreads rapidly from person to person by airborne droplets carried in a cough or a sneeze. You can also get the flu when touching your own eyes, nose or mouth after touching flu contaminated surfaces which may include an infected person’s hands.

### Flu Clinics

The flu clinic program will run from the end of October through to early December. Vaccination is recommended during this timeframe to ensure that the vaccine’s protective antibodies are in place before flu activity reaches its highest level, which typically peaks in February. The duration of the flu season varies from year to year but can run as late as May. Given that the vaccine is most effective for a six-month period, our clinics are scheduled to ensure optimum flu protection. The month of November is considered the prime month for flu immunization.

Your workplace contact will be providing you with information about flu clinic vaccination options available to you.

### Flu Vaccine

The vaccine components often change from year to year, based on worldwide tracking for changes in the virus and predictions about which strains will circulate each season. The flu vaccine our clinics will be administering is an inactivated (i.e. killed virus) vaccine that will provide protection against three influenza viruses: A/Brisbane (H1N1), A/Kansas (H3N2) and B/Colorado. Getting vaccinated this fall is necessary to maximize protection as the specific viruses included in each year’s vaccine varies from year to year. In addition, the effectiveness of the vaccine is known to lessen over time and may not span two influenza seasons.

### Who Should Get the Flu Shot

Canada’s National Advisory Committee on Immunization continues to recommend that everyone six months old and older should get a flu vaccine (except those with egg allergies combined with other condition(s)—see information on page two). The vaccine is especially important for people who are at higher risk of developing problems from the flu, including adults and children who have long-term health problems, pregnant women, or those in contact with or caring for individuals who are at high risk for complications. For a full list of those who are considered to be at higher risk, please check the [HealthLink BC](#) website.

If you plan on visiting a health care facility or other patient care location, you may be expected to wear a mask if you did not get a flu shot. Be sure to request a proof of influenza vaccination card from the nurse upon vaccination.

### **Egg Allergic Individuals**

If you have an egg allergy and need more information, see HealthLink BC Files [#12c](#) and [#12d](#).

If you are still unsure if you can receive the flu vaccine, talk to your health care provider if you have had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of the influenza vaccine or to eggs or any other component of the vaccine.

### **Pregnant Employees**

During our flu clinics, the vaccine will be available to pregnant employees that are seeking to be immunized for influenza. Please note that pregnant employees in their first trimester will be asked to provide a physician's note at the clinic prior to being vaccinated.

### **Benefits & Risks**

The flu vaccine is a safe and effective way to help stay healthy, prevent illness and protect yourself and others. When you get the flu shot, your body's immune system develops protection (antibodies) against the strains of the virus in the vaccine so that you are better protected against influenza than those who do not get the flu vaccine. The antibodies help prevent infection or reduce the severity of the illness. If the strains in the vaccine are well-matched to the strains of influenza virus circulating in the community the vaccine prevents flu in more than seven out of 10 vaccinated persons. As a result, your time spent being ill from the flu is either eliminated or greatly reduced.

In some cases, people may experience redness or soreness where the flu shot was given. Other symptoms may include localized swelling, fever, headache and aching muscles approximately six to twelve hours after receiving the immunization. Anaphylaxis is a rare and extreme allergic reaction which can occur if a person is allergic to any of the components of the vaccine.

### **Consent Form**

Please be sure to fill out a consent form and bring it to your clinic. The nurse will review your form and discuss any concerns that you may have. Consent forms will be emailed to you as well as posted on MyHR once the inline schedule is complete.

### **Additional Information & Resources**

If you would like more information about the Cold and Flu Program, including ways to avoid getting the flu, visit [MyHR](#). For additional information regarding the flu, visit [HealthLinkBC](#). For general questions regarding flu clinic scheduling or forms, please ask your workplace contact or email [cold.flu@gov.bc.ca](mailto:cold.flu@gov.bc.ca).

For confidential inquiries related to individual health issues, please contact a flu clinic nurse at [FLUOHN@healthserv.com](mailto:FLUOHN@healthserv.com) or call 1-866-663-5848, extension 232.

**Thank you from the BC Public Service Agency**



**Where ideas work**