

Health Care Provider Q & A: 2015/2016 Universal Influenza Immunization Program

A. Universal Influenza Immunization Program

1. What is the Universal Influenza Immunization Program (UIIP)?

Ontario's Universal Influenza Immunization Program (UIIP) is an immunization program which offers influenza vaccine free of charge each year to all persons six months of age and older who live, work or go to school in Ontario.

2. Why does Ontario offer a UIIP?

The first program of its kind in the world, the UIIP was officially launched in the fall of 2000 as part of the commitment to protect and promote the health of Ontarians. Specifically, the UIIP aims to:

- Provide individual protection against influenza;
- Reduce the number and severity of influenza cases;
- Reduce the impact on the health care system during the influenza season; and
- Decrease the overall economic impact in both direct health care costs and indirect societal costs.

Since the introduction of the UIIP in Ontario, other jurisdictions have adopted universal influenza immunization programs including many Canadian provinces and territories and the United States.

3. Where and how can Ontarians access publicly funded influenza vaccine?

The influenza vaccine is available at no cost to the public through their primary care provider, public health unit clinics, pharmacies, and in various other settings such as long-term care homes, workplaces, hospitals and community health centres. During the influenza season, Ontarians can visit www.ontario.ca/flu and use the Flu Vaccine Locator Tool to find an influenza immunization clinic nearby.

People may be required to provide proof that they live, work or attend school in Ontario to receive the vaccine. Many different identification (ID) documents are accepted to prove eligibility. If the influenza vaccine is being administered at a doctor's office or pharmacy, a valid Ontario Health Card must be provided.

B. Influenza

4. How many people typically become infected with influenza every year?

Influenza is ranked among the top 10 infectious diseases affecting the Canadian population. According to National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI), approximately 10-20% of the Canadian population become infected with influenza each year.

Rates of infection are highest in children aged five to nine years, but rates of serious illness and death are highest in children under two years of age, older persons (65 years of age and older), and people with underlying medical conditions.

5. How many people in Ontario are hospitalized or die of influenza every year?

According to NACI, 12,200 hospitalizations related to influenza occur on average each year in Canada. The actual numbers can vary from year to year depending on the severity of the influenza season. Since Ontario represents 39% of the Canadian population and assuming that influenza-related hospitalizations are distributed evenly across the country, it is estimated that there would be an average of approximately 4,750 influenza-associated hospitalizations per year in Ontario.

According to NACI, there are approximately 3,500 deaths related to influenza on average each year in Canada. Again, as Ontario represents 39% of the Canadian population, it is estimated that there would be an average of approximately 1,365 influenza-associated deaths per year in Ontario. The highest mortality rate typically occurs among adults 65 years of age and older.

6. Who is most at risk from complications from influenza?

Individuals at high-risk of influenza-related complications are strongly encouraged to receive the influenza vaccine (unless contraindicated). The high-risk groups include:

- Young children under five years of age (especially those younger than two years of age);
- Children (age 6 months to 18 years) with neurologic or neurodevelopmental conditions or undergoing treatment with acetylsalicylic acid for long periods;
- Adults 65 years of age and older;
- Individuals of any age who are residents in long-term care home (LTCH) or other chronic care facilities;
- Individuals with underlying health conditions (e.g., cardiac/pulmonary disorders, renal disease, morbid obesity, diabetes and cancer or weakened immune systems);
- Pregnant women; and
- Aboriginal Peoples.

In addition, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends that everyone who is capable of transmitting influenza to those at high risk also get immunized. This group includes:

- Health care workers;
- Household contacts of those at high risk; and
- Persons who provide care to children under five years of age.

In addition, the ministry strongly recommends that swine and poultry industry workers receive influenza immunization as early as possible.

7. Is it true that getting the influenza vaccine every year might result in less protection than in those who have not been vaccinated?

Recent studies have suggested that those who receive influenza vaccination every year may have a lower response to the influenza vaccine than those who have not been previously or recently vaccinated. However, these studies indicate that in any year, you get better protection by being vaccinated than by not receiving the vaccine. All expert advisory groups continue to recommend annual influenza vaccine for those eligible for publicly funded vaccine. Further studies are needed to understand the effect of repeat influenza vaccinations.

C. 2015/16 Universal Influenza Immunization Program

8. Which influenza vaccines will be publicly funded in 2015/16?

For the 2015/2016 UIIP, Ontario will be offering the following influenza vaccines:

	Agriflu® / Fluviral®	Influvac®	Fluad®	FluLaval Tetra® / Fluzone Quadrivalent®	Flumist® Quadrivalent
Influenza Vaccine Formulation	Trivalent inactivated vaccine (TIV)	Trivalent inactivated vaccine (TIV)	Trivalent inactivated vaccine (adjuvanted) (TIV-adjuvanted)	Quadrivalent inactivated vaccine (QIV)	Quadrivalent live attenuated vaccine (Q-LAIV)
Dosage	0.5mL	0.5mL	0.5mL	0.5mL	0.2mL (0.1mL in each nostril)
Route of Administration	Intramuscular Injection	Intramuscular Injection	Intramuscular Injection	Intramuscular Injection	Intranasal spray
Eligibility (see "Vaccines for Specific Age Groups" below)	6 months and older*	18 years and older	65 years and older who reside in long-term care homes	6 months through 17 years	2 through 17 years; preferred vaccine for 2 through 5 years
Potential Allergens	Agriflu: Egg protein^ Kanamycin Neomycin Thimerosal Fluviral: Egg protein^ Thimerosal	Egg protein^ Chicken protein Gentamicin	Egg protein^ Chicken protein Kanamycin Neomycin	FluLaval: Egg protein^ Thimerosal Fluzone: Egg protein^ Thimerosal	Arginine Egg protein Gelatin Gentamicin
Package Description	Multi-dose vial	Single dose syringe	Single dose syringe	Multi-dose vial	Single dose sprayer
Once punctured, discard vial after	28 days	n/a	n/a	FluLaval: 28 days Fluzone: expiry date indicated on vial	n/a
Package Dimensions (length x width x height)	3cm x 3cm x 7cm	18.8cm x 15.2cm x 1.7cm	10.8cm x 10.2cm x 4.4cm	3cm x 3cm x 6cm	10.6cm x 17.6cm x 2.9cm

* Unless specifically requested the TIVs are primarily targeted to adults 18 years of age and older.

^ Egg allergy is not a contraindication to receiving inactivated influenza vaccines (see National Advisory Committee on Immunization Influenza Statement available at www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/naci-ccni/flu-grippe-eng.php)

Important Notes:

- Publicly funded influenza vaccines must be administered by a regulated health care professional
- Publicly funded vaccine must not be administered to individuals outside the eligibility criteria or to individuals with contraindications to the vaccine
- Trained pharmacists may only administer publicly funded influenza vaccine to individuals 5 years of age and older

Vaccines for Specific Age Groups:

Age Group	Recommended Vaccine	Alternative Vaccine
6 through 23 months	QIV	TIV [§] (if requested or if QIV is not available)
2 through 5 years	Q-LAIV	QIV (if requested or if Q-LAIV is not available) TIV [§] (if requested or if QIV is not available)
6 through 17 years	QIV or Q-LAIV	TIV [§] (if requested or if QIV / Q-LAIV is not available)
18 years and older	TIV	None
65 years and older who reside in long-term care homes	TIV-adjuvanted	TIV (if requested or if TIV-adjuvanted is not available)

[§] Only Agriflu[®] and Fluviral[®] can be used to immunize individuals under 18 years of age.

9. Which strains of influenza are covered by the 2015/16 influenza vaccines?

For the Northern Hemisphere's 2015/16 season, the WHO has recommended the following strains be included in the vaccine that contains three strains (trivalent vaccine):

- an A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus;
- an A/Switzerland/9715293/2013 (H3N2)-like virus;
- a B/Phuket/3073/2013-like virus.

The influenza vaccines that protect against four strains of influenza (quadrivalent vaccines) contain all three influenza strains listed above plus a second influenza B strain, the B/Brisbane/60/2008-like virus.

10. Is this season's vaccine a good match for influenza viruses?

Each year the influenza vaccine is made to protect against the strains of influenza that are determined to be most likely to circulate during the upcoming influenza season. The vaccine strains are chosen in February by the World Health Organization (WHO) based on monitoring of circulating strains from around the world. In 2014/15 the H3N2 strain chosen for the influenza vaccine in February was not well matched to the strain that circulated during the 2014/15 influenza season.

The influenza vaccines for the 2015/16 UIIP contain two new strains compared to the previous year's vaccine, including the A/Switzerland H3N2 strain that replaced the A/Texas H3N2 strain in the 2014/15 vaccine. The A/Switzerland strain recommended by the WHO is predicted to provide protection against the most common H3N2 strains that circulated during the 2014/15 influenza season. However, since the actual strains used to make the influenza vaccine may differ somewhat from the WHO recommended strains, there is uncertainty about how well the actual strains used to make the vaccine will protect against the circulating strains in the upcoming season.

11. Influenza Vaccine Ordering and Distribution?

Please visit the ministry website at www.ontario.ca/influenza for details on ordering publicly funded influenza vaccine.

For additional information on influenza or the vaccine, please visit the following websites or call your local public health unit:

- a) Ontario's Universal Influenza Immunization Program: www.ontario.ca/influenza
- b) Public Health Agency of Canada site: National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) Statement on Seasonal Influenza Vaccine: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/naci-ccni/#rec>
- c) *Immunize Canada*: www.immunize.cpha.ca

d) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): Seasonal Influenza: www.cdc.gov/flu

For a list of public health unit locations, please visit

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx>.

ServiceOntario, INFOline: 1-877-234-4343 toll free in Ontario (TTY: 1-800-387-5559)

Version française disponible en communiquant avec le 1 877 234-4343 ATS: 1 800 387-5559 (web site:

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/fr/ccom/flu/>