

RexallTM FluShot

Protect yourself: Know the facts about the flu

Commonly known as “the flu”, influenza is an infection in the airways caused by the influenza virus. The flu is easily caught and easily spread. Although some symptoms may be cold-like, they are far more serious: headache, chills and dry cough are rapidly joined by body aches and fever. While the fever may decline on the second or third day of the illness, full recovery may take up to 6 weeks.

Influenza vs. COVID-19

1. Getting the flu shot does not protect you from COVID-19. It is also important to note that getting the COVID-19 vaccine does not protect you from getting the flu.
2. Symptoms of COVID-19 and Influenza may be very similar, however, COVID-19 is more contagious and complications can be more serious than Influenza.
3. If you are experiencing any symptoms and are unsure if they may be cold, flu or COVID-19 related, then you should **CALL** your pharmacist or health care professional for instructions on getting tested for COVID-19.

| Symptom | Cold | Influenza | COVID-19 |
|----------------------------|---|--|--|
| Fever | Rare | Usual, high fever (102 F / 39 C - 104 F / 40 C), sudden onset, lasts 3-4 days | Usual |
| Headache | Rare | Usual, can be severe | Usual |
| General aches & pains | Sometimes, mild | Usual, often severe | Usual |
| Fatigue and weakness | Sometimes, mild | Usual, severe, may last 2-3 weeks or more | Usual |
| Extreme fatigue | Unusual | Usual, early onset, can be severe | Usual |
| Runny, stuffy nose | Common | Common | Common |
| Sneezing | Common | Sometimes | Unusual |
| Sore throat | Common | Common | Common |
| Chest discomfort, coughing | Sometimes, mild to moderate | Usual, can become severe | Usual, can become severe - shortness of breath |
| Complications | Can lead to sinus congestion or earache | Can lead to pneumonia and respiratory failure, can worsen a current chronic condition, can be life-threatening | Can lead to pneumonia and respiratory failure, can worsen a current chronic condition, can be life-threatening |
| Prevention | Frequent hand-washing | Annual vaccination and frequent hand-washing | Vaccination, frequent handwashing, wearing masks and physical distancing |

Influenza can lead to severe complications for thousands each year.

While most people recover fully, influenza may lead to more severe and life-threatening illnesses, such as pneumonia, resulting in hospitalization and even death. Vaccination is the only preventative measure that has been proven to reduce mortality rates caused by influenza.

Immunization is the best prevention.

It's true! While a good diet, vitamins and exercise all contribute to your general health, they may not be enough to protect you from the influenza virus, especially if you already have a medical condition. Vaccination every Fall does provide increased protection. Furthermore, it reduces the seriousness of the infection should you contract it. For the following people it is especially important to get a flu shot, because they are at greater risk of complications:

- Anyone with conditions including:
 - heart or lung disease
 - diabetes or any other metabolic disease
 - cancer
 - kidney disease
 - a blood disorder
 - a weakened immune system
- Seniors and anyone who lives, works or volunteers in a nursing home, chronic care facility, retirement home or other health care setting
- Emergency service workers including fire, police and ambulance staff
- Anyone, including children, who lives in the same household or is in contact with people at risk such as those mentioned above

Some people should NOT get a flu shot.

Influenza vaccine should not be given to people who have had an anaphylactic reaction to a previous dose or who have developed Guillain-Barre Syndrome within six weeks of influenza vaccination. Children who are under 6 months of age should not be given the vaccine because it does not work well in this age group. If you have a serious acute illness you should postpone your shot until you are well.

Immunization side effects are minor.

Most commonly, mild soreness at the vaccination site is the only side effect. Less common are headaches and muscle pain. As a precaution, you may be asked to remain at the pharmacy for 15 - 20 minutes following vaccination.

Facts about the Flu Shot

- Flu vaccine can't give you the flu.
- New flu strains mean a new vaccine each year.
- You should get immunized as soon as flu season starts. After getting the flu shot, immunity may take up to 2 weeks to develop.
- Children and youth who are at risk need a flu shot.
- Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding can get the flu shot.

The flu shot is the most effective and longest lasting protection against the influenza virus and the illness it can cause. As people are vaccinated, the influenza virus has less chance to multiply and circulate in the community. Protecting yourself can also benefit those around you who may be at risk of severe complication from influenza.

There are so many reasons why it makes sense to get immunized – ask your Rexall Pharmacist about the flu shot today.

*Subject to vaccine availability. By provincial legislation, pharmacists cannot administer a flu shot to children under a certain age. Ask your pharmacist for age restrictions.