

Have a medical condition? You need a flu shot

Why should I get the flu shot?

People who have a medical condition are at high risk of complications from the flu. If you get the flu, your medical condition may also get worse.

Anyone with the following medical conditions should get the flu shot:

- Asthma or chronic lung disease
- Heart disease
- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Kidney disease
- Anemia
- A weakened immune system because of a medical condition (for example, AIDS or HIV infection) or because of medications that they take (for example, long-term use of steroids)
- People who are very obese

If you have a medical condition, you probably have a routine to manage it. For example, if you have diabetes, you monitor your blood sugar levels. Or if you have asthma, you keep your inhaler handy.

Getting the flu shot every year is just another part of your medical management routine. It's your best defence against the flu and serious flu complications, such as pneumonia. Since the flu is contagious, it's also important that your family and friends get the flu shot as well.

Get a flu shot early. It's a good idea to get the flu shot at the start of flu season. Although the exact timing and duration of flu seasons vary, flu season can begin as early as November and last until May. It takes about 2 weeks for the shot to give you protection against flu viruses. The sooner you get the flu shot, the sooner you will be protected.

How do medical conditions increase the risk of serious complications from the flu?

Having a medical condition can make your immune system less able to fight infections. People with medical conditions are more likely to get flu complications which may result in hospitalization or occasionally even death.

Is the flu shot safe?

The flu shot is very safe! Like all medicines, flu vaccine ingredients have been tested to make sure they are safe. Public Health Ontario and the Public Health Agency of Canada check the safety of the flu shot regularly.

How can I avoid getting the flu?

- Get your flu shot. It will protect you, as well as your family and friends.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or a hand sanitizer that contains alcohol.
- Cough and sneeze into a tissue or your arm, not your hand.
- Stay at home if you are sick, and avoid contact with people who are sick with the flu.
- Clean surfaces often (for example, counter tops, keyboards and telephones). Flu viruses can live on surfaces for up to 48 hours.

I think I have the flu, what can I do?

Symptoms of the flu include fever, cough or sore throat, headache and tiredness. Some people may also have vomiting and diarrhea. If you develop flu symptoms, contact your doctor or nurse practitioner or call Telehealth at 1-866-797-0000 to speak with a health care professional.

Where do I get the flu shot?

You can get a free flu shot at a pharmacy, your doctor or nurse practitioner's office, a workplace flu clinic or a public health clinic.



For more information visit:
[**ontario.ca/flu**](https://www.ontario.ca/flu)