

Get ready for flu season now!

This is just a friendly reminder that flu season is coming, and that now is the time to get ready for it. And that the best way to prepare is to get a flu shot.

Flu season lasts through the fall and winter, and involves the spread of more than just one kind of flu virus. Remember, if you get the flu, you can spread it to others at home, at work, and in the community. That is why Health Canada recommends flu vaccinations for all people at higher risk of developing flu complications, including anyone over 65, as well as those who come in contact with them on a regular basis.

Flu season tips:

1. **Get the vaccine for seasonal flu as recommended**, and encourage your family to get vaccinated as well.
2. **Make plans to care for sick household members** or for children if schools dismiss students or early childhood programs close.
3. **Be prepared in case you get sick and need to stay home.** To help avoid the need to make trips out in public while you are sick, have the following items on hand: a supply of fever-reducing medicines that contain acetaminophen or ibuprofen, alcohol-based hand rubs, and tissues.
4. **Remember to cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue.** Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
5. **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.** Germs spread this way.
6. **Wash your hands often with soap and water**, especially after you cough or sneeze. If soap and water are not available, an alcohol-based hand rub can be used.

The flu: Try not to get it, and try not to spread it!

With flu season [almost upon us **OR** already underway], we thought it would be a good time to review some flu basics. In particular, some of the warning signs of flu, and how not to spread flu once it strikes you or a family member.

If you or a family member is not feeling well:

- **Watch carefully for signs and symptoms of flu.** Some children may not be able to tell you about their symptoms, which can delay your response to their illness. Symptoms of flu can include all or some of the following:
 - ✓ Fever
 - ✓ Sore throat
 - ✓ Body aches
 - ✓ Chills
 - ✓ Sometimes diarrhea and vomiting
 - ✓ Not everyone with flu will have a fever.
 - ✓ Cough
 - ✓ Runny or stuffy nose
 - ✓ Headache
 - ✓ Fatigue

- **Watch for emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention.**
These warning signs include one or more of the following in adults:
 - ✓ Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
 - ✓ Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
 - ✓ Sudden dizziness
 - ✓ Confusion
 - ✓ Severe or persistent vomiting
- **The person sick with the flu should stay home** until at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever without the need for fever-reducing medicine.
- **Keep the sick person in a separate room** (a sick room) in the house as much as possible to limit contact with household members who are not sick. Consider designating a single person as the main caregiver for the sick person. This person should not be at high risk for complications from the flu.

To protect other family members:

- **Get your family vaccinated** for seasonal flu according to Public Health recommendations.
- **Cough and sneeze into a tissue** or into your elbow or shoulder if a tissue is not available. Throw tissues away right after use.
- **Make sure hands are washed often**, especially after you cough or sneeze. If soap and water are not available, an alcohol-based hand rub can be used. Help young children wash their hands for 20 seconds with soap and water (long enough to sing “The Happy Birthday Song” twice).
- **Clean surfaces and objects that are frequently touched.** Wipe these surfaces with a household disinfectant, following the directions on the product label. Additional disinfection of these surfaces beyond routine cleaning is not recommended.