



## Influenza Vaccine...the quick facts

**Q: What is it?**

**A:** It is an inactivated vaccine that provides active immunization against the influenza virus. The vaccines are prepared annually based on the strains for the upcoming year. The antigens for the 2002/03 influenza vaccine are derived from A/New Caledonia/20/99, A/Panama/2007/99 and B/Hong Kong/330/2001. Fluviral® S/F (2002-2003) is the vaccine available to Saskatchewan residents this year.

**Q: When should I get the vaccine?**

**A:** Vaccinations should be administered each year *prior* to the flu season i.e. October-November.

**Q: How quickly does it work?**

**A:** It will take approximately 7 days for the antibodies to develop.

**Q: Who should get the vaccine?**

**A:** The vaccine should be administered to all individuals in order to decrease the spread of the flu virus.

*It is specifically indicated for the following high-risk individuals:*

- residents of nursing homes/institutions
- elderly (≥ 65 years old)
- adults/children with chronic conditions (ex. cardiac/pulmonary disorders, diabetes, cancer etc.)
- children 6 months-18 yrs exposed to extensive ASA
- HIV patients
- those in close contact with high risk individuals i.e. healthcare professionals/household contacts

*Also recommended in:*

- pregnant women in high risk groups as mentioned above
- women who will be in their 2<sup>nd</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup> trimester during the flu season
- individuals providing essential community services
- travelers
- employers/employees to prevent absence from workplace

**Q: How old do you have to be to get the vaccine?**

**A:** The vaccine is less immunogenic, (i.e. less likely to protect against the flu virus), in infants < 6months of age. It may be administered to anyone >6 months, however caution is warranted for infants 6-35months of age due to the increased risk of febrile convulsions.

**Q: What is split dosing and who gets it?**

**A:** Split dosing is indicated for children < 9 years old who are receiving the vaccine for the first time. The 2 doses would then be given 4 weeks apart.

**Q: What are the side effects of the vaccine?**

**A:** Pain and tenderness at the injection site, flu-like symptoms (i.e. fever, headache, muscle aches). This may occur 6-12 hours post injection and last up to 2 days

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**Q: What are the contraindications?**

**A:** It should not be given to anyone who is febrile, has an acute illness or active infection. A minor upper respiratory tract infection is not reason to delay the immunization. The vaccine *should not* be administered to anyone with a sensitivity/allergy to eggs or thimersol. Patients with an active neurological disorder should only receive the vaccine once the condition has stabilized.

***The influenza vaccine may be safely administered to pregnant women and breast-feeding mothers***

**Q: Who is covered for the vaccine?**

**A:** Public health clinics in Saskatchewan generally administer the vaccine free of charge to the following individuals:

- seniors ( $\geq 65$  years of age)
- children/adults with chronic conditions such as lung heart or kidney disease, cancer, diabetics and immune disorders

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