

## Preparing for the 2020 Flu Season

### Key Messages:

- Individuals with neurologic conditions such as spinal cord injury (SCI) are at high risk for influenza-related complications.
- Getting the flu shot is very important. Prevention of influenza is key.
- Because of the high risk for complications, it is recommended that you contact your primary care provider to prioritize and schedule your flu shot as soon as as possible in early October when the first batches of vaccine are released.
- The safest way to receive your flu shot during the current pandemic is to attend a scheduled appointment with your primary care provider.

### Knowing Your Influenza Vaccines:

<b>What are the available vaccines for the 2020-2021 season?</b>	
For 9 years up to and including 64 years; also for 65 years and older	<u>Standard-dose quadrivalent (QIV)</u> FluLaval Tetra, Fluzone Quadrivalent, Flucelvax Quad
65 years and over	<u>High-dose trivalent (TIV)</u> Fluzone High-Dose
<b>This season's flu shot will protect you against:</b>	Influenza A (H1N1 and H3N2 strains) Influenza B (Yamagata and Victoria lineage) (Trivalent has B Victoria only)
<b>When will these vaccines be available?</b>	Approximately mid-October, no exact date available yet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please get your vaccine as early as possible; advocate to your healthcare provider to receive your vaccine as soon as available</li> </ul>
<b>Which vaccine should I have?</b>	64 years: Standard dose 65+ years: High dose <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Egg allergy is not a contraindication</li> </ul>
<b>Where can I get my vaccine?</b>	Your primary care provider (preferred) or at your local pharmacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please be vigilant and ensure a safe environment when getting your flu shot (i.e. ask what safety measures your local pharmacy is employing to ensure current public health measures)</li> </ul>

**Influenza Treatment: Antivirals**

- Antivirals are not a substitute for the flu shot for prevention of influenza
- Can be considered for treatment in individuals who are at high risk for complications.
- Treatment with antiviral medications can decrease the duration of illness and can help prevent complications.
- Be vigilant about reporting symptoms and illness to your care provider since antiviral medications work best if started within 48 hours of onset of symptoms.
- Antivirals for influenza include: Oseltamivir (Tamiflu, oral medication) and Zanamivir (Relenza, inhalation medication)

**Your Home Flu Management Kit:**

- Fluids including electrolyte replacement in case of vomiting or diarrhea (please speak to your care provider if you are currently on fluid restriction)
- Medication to reduce fever and relieve muscle aches

For example, Acetaminophen (i.e. Tylenol) or Ibuprofen (i.e. Advil)

If you are currently taking pain medication, please check if any already include acetaminophen to ensure that you do not exceed recommended daily dosing

Also check for any pain medications similar to Ibuprofen (other “NSAIDs” or Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) to ensure you aren’t taking too much of the same type of medication

Over the counter cough and cold remedies have limited benefit on symptoms and often contain acetaminophen

- Hand sanitizer (60%)
- Facial tissue
- Medical supplies (i.e. catheter and dressing supplies) and medication – keep a 30 day supply on hand (if this will not create financial hardship)
- Pre-arrange help to get groceries and other supplies
- Ensure you have your healthcare provider phone number on hand

**Influenza vs. COVID-19: How do I know if I have influenza?**

	<b>Influenza</b>	<b>COVID-19</b>
Common symptoms	Fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, cough, <b>nasal congestion, sore throat</b> , fatigue	Fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, cough, <b>shortness of breath</b> , fatigue, <b>loss of smell</b>
How long before I have symptoms? (Incubation period)	Approximately 1-4 days after exposure	Approximately 2-14 days after exposure
When am I most likely to infect others?	You are most infectious after you are showing symptoms	You are most likely to infect someone else 2 days before you are showing symptoms
How long will I feel sick?	Symptoms usually peak during the first 3-7 days of being sick	Symptoms may peak during week 2 or 3 of being sick

**Resources:**

1. Canadian Pharmacists Association. (2018). *Influenza*. RxTx. Retrieved from: <https://www.e-therapeutics.ca/print/new/documents/CHAPTER/en/influenza>
2. Public Health Agency of Canada. (September 18, 2020). *Flu (influenza): symptoms & treatment*. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/flu-influenza.html>
3. Spinal Cord Injury Ontario. (2020). COVID-19 guidance for SCI community. Retrieved from: <https://sciontario.org/covid-19-guidance-for-sci-community/>
4. Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). (2020). *Fact sheet: influenza vaccines for the 2020-2021 influenza season*. Retrieved from: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/f/2020/fact-sheet-influenza-vaccine-2020-2021.pdf?la=en>
5. Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). (2020). *Fact sheet: influenza antiviral treatment*. Retrieved from: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/f/2020/fact-sheet--antiviral-medications-influenza.pdf?la=en>
6. Solomon, D.A., Sherman, A.C., & Kanijlal, S. (2020). Influenza in the COVID-19 Era. *JAMA Insights: Clinical Update*. Doi:10.1001/jama.2020.14661