



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

Flu Season

About the Flu

- The flu is a highly infectious respiratory disease caused by inhaling a virus that attacks cells in the upper respiratory tract and causes symptoms such as fatigue, fever and chills, a hacking cough and body aches.
- Flu victims, especially elderly people, are susceptible to potentially life-threatening secondary infections.
- Flu outbreaks occur regularly and suddenly, and infection spreads rapidly – especially in communities that have a lot of contact with each other, such as First Nations communities.
- Individuals who have influenza are already infectious one-three days before they show symptoms.
- In Canada, there are about 3,500 deaths annually; in the US, there are 20,000 deaths (90% among persons older than 65) annually due to the flu and complications.
- The flu is caused mostly by two types of influenza, type A and type B. Influenza A is responsible for most human adult cases. Influenza B causes milder respiratory illness and affects school-aged children more than adults.
- The most serious outbreaks are pandemics, which affect millions of people worldwide and last for several months.
- The likelihood of severe illness, hospitalization and mortality is higher for First Nations people during a pandemic, making community flu shots a priority.

About the Flu Shot

- **Flu shots are recommended as the best way to prevent the flu and are free for all First Nations and Aboriginal peoples at home and away from home (on- and off-reserve).**
- Studies show that people who get the flu shot are better protected than unvaccinated people.
- The flu shot helps our bodies do what they do naturally: build immunity to fight off disease.
- Vaccination strengthens your immune system by teaching it to fight off influenza.
- As a result of anti-vaccination myths and people being unvaccinated, many infectious preventable diseases once under good control (such as measles, mumps and pertussis) are reappearing.
- Vaccination saves more lives than any other health intervention.
- Vaccination is one of the safest health interventions available. Serious side effects are extremely rare; the most common mild reaction is a self-limited sore arm.
- First Nations people are not at higher risk of experiencing negative side effects from immunization.
- **Remember: Elders and infants are especially vulnerable to the flu virus. By choosing to get the flu shot, you're protecting your community and loved ones!**