



First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness

## Notice | Re: Increased Influenza activity in BC

January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2014

To First Nations Communities,

Happy New Year to all BC First Nations from the First Nations Health Authority!

In the past week, the number of reported influenza cases in BC was the highest yet this flu season. The most common form of the influenza virus in BC this year is Influenza A(H1N1)pdm09. Influenza A (H1N1) was responsible for the pandemic in 2009. In that year it was predicted that this new virus would result in more hospitalizations and deaths than had been seen in prior influenza seasons. This was not the case; however, young children, teens, and pregnant women did suffer more serious illness due to H1N1.

This year's flu shot will protect you against H1N1 and keep you from transmitting it to others. In fact, even last year's flu shot provided this protection because public health officials predicted that H1N1 would return. At this time, H1N1 seems to be a flu virus which has become a regular part of the flu season. It is especially dangerous for children, seniors, pregnant women and those with other health conditions, but H1N1 influenza also causes illness in previously healthy young adults.

We encourage you to take the following steps to protect loved ones and stay well during flu season:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water;
- Sneeze/cough into your sleeve and not your hands;
- Throw away used tissues;
- Ensure household surfaces are kept as clean as possible; and
- If you are feeling sick, stay home from work or school and call your local health care provider or HealthLink at 811.

Free flu shots for Aboriginal people are available at your Health Centre or Nursing Station, and can also be obtained in physician's offices or pharmacies. If you haven't had the flu shot this year, don't delay- the flu shot remains the most effective way to prevent the flu.

Remember: when you get the flu shot, you are not only protecting yourself, but also your family and community.

If you have any questions about the flu shot please visit: <http://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/communicable-disease-control/influenza-information> or contact our Health Protection Unit:

Jessica Harper, Immunization coordinator, FNHA. | [jessica.harper@fnha.ca](mailto:jessica.harper@fnha.ca) | Tel: 604-666-8365

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Is H1N1 back again?

H1N1 was seen for the first time in 2009 and since then has been one of the several types of seasonal (regular) influenzas that have been seen.

### Am I eligible for a free flu shot?

Aboriginal peoples (on and off reserve) are eligible to receive a free flu shot this influenza season.

### What is in the flu shot this year?

This year the influenza vaccine contains:

- A/California (H1N1)
- A/Victoria (H3N2)
- B/Massachusetts

The 2 'A' strains, California and Victoria are the same as in last year's vaccine and the 'B' strain, Massachusetts, is new.

### If I was immunized last year am I safe?

It is recommended that you receive your flu shot annually; last year's flu shot does not guarantee immunity this year.

### Are my kids at risk?

Children who have not received the flu shot are at risk for getting the flu.

Children at risk of getting serious complications from the flu illness include those:

- aged 6 months to less than 5 years,
- children and teenagers needing to take aspirin for long periods of time due to a medical condition.

Children and adults with the following medical conditions are also at risk of getting serious complications from the flu illness:

- Heart or lung disorders that require regular medical care, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or cystic fibrosis
- Kidney disease, chronic liver disease such as hepatitis, diabetes, cancer, anemia, or weakened immune system
- Those with health conditions causing difficulty breathing, swallowing, or a risk of choking on food or fluids, such as people with severe brain damage, spinal cord injury, seizures or neuromuscular disorders.
- Those who are very obese.