Health PEI

Fact Sheet:

Influenza Vaccine - Live Attenuated (LAIV) (Trivalent intranasal vaccine)

1. What is influenza?

Influenza, often called the flu, is a virus that spreads easily from person to person and is caused primarily by influenza A and B viruses. Common flu symptoms include the sudden onset of fever, cough, muscle and joint pain, headache, chills, loss of appetite, fatigue, and sore throat. Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea may also occur, especially in children. About 10 to 20% of Canadians are infected with influenza each year. Most people will recover within a week to 10 days.
For some, the flu can cause serious health problems, such as **pneumonia**, a lung infection. It can also make other health conditions worse, including heart disease, kidney disease, and diabetes.

The flu can be serious, especially for older adults, young children, pregnant people, and those with certain health conditions. In Canada, about **3,500 people die each year from flu-related illness and complications**.

2. Who is recommended to receive the influenza vaccine?

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends that everyone 6 months of age and older get a flu vaccine every year. **This is especially important for people who are at higher risk of getting very sick from the flu, including:**

- People at high risk of severe disease, influenza-related complications, or hospitalization,
- Adults and children with chronic health conditions, such as cancer and other immune compromising conditions, diabetes, heart disease, lung disease, obesity, kidney disease, neurologic or neurodevelopment conditions, anemia or hemoglobinopathy).
- children 6 months to 18 years of age undergoing treatment for long periods with acetylsalicylic acid (ASA)
- people 65 years of age and older
- people who live in nursing homes or other long-term care facilities
- all children 6-59 months of age;
- individuals who are pregnant or those planning to become pregnant
- Indigenous peoples
- People who can pass along the flu virus to those at high risk: care givers, health care providers, childcare providers, family and other household members.

After you get your flu vaccine, it takes about 2 to 3 weeks for your body to build protection against the flu. This protection continues throughout the flu season.

3. What is the live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV)?

LAIV is a flu vaccine given as a nasal spray. It is an option for **healthy children and youth aged 2 to 17 years on PEI**.

4. What are the contents of LAIV?

LAIV is a **flu vaccine given as a spray in the nose**. It contains **weakened flu viruses** that help your body learn how to fight the flu without causing illness. The vaccine protects against **three types of flu viruses (two A and one B strain)** that are expected to be common during the flu season.

LAIV also contains small amounts of other ingredients to keep the vaccine safe and effective.

- The vaccine does not contain preservatives (e.g., no thimerosal).
- The packaging does not contain latex.

If you would like a complete list of ingredients, ask your health care provider for the vaccine product information.

5. What are the possible reactions to LAIV?

The nasal spray flu vaccine contains weakened flu viruses that help your body build protection against the flu. Some people may have mild side effects after receiving the vaccine. These side effects are usually much milder than the flu and often last only **1 to 2 days**. Symptoms may include a runny or stuffy nose, cough, sore throat and fever. Other symptoms can include headache, decreased appetite, weakness, muscle soreness, chills, vomiting, stomachache and irritability. **Acetaminophen (Tylenol®)** can help relieve fever, aches, and other mild symptoms.
If symptoms are severe or do not go away after a few days, contact your health care provider.

In very rare cases, a serious allergic reaction can occur after vaccination. Health care providers are trained to treat these reactions right away. Most serious allergic reactions happen within **15 minutes** after the vaccine is given, which is why you may be asked to wait for a short time before leaving.
You will be asked to remain in the waiting room for 15 minutes after receiving LAIV.

6. What are the situations in which LAIV should <u>not</u> be given?

The nasal spray flu vaccine should not be given to:

- Children less than 2 years of age.
- **Children who have had a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to a flu vaccine or one of its ingredients should not get the nasal spray flu vaccine. Children with an egg allergy can still receive a flu vaccine.**
- History of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of a previous influenza immunization.
- Children 2 to 17 years of age who take aspirin or medicines that contain aspirin should not receive the nasal spray flu vaccine. These children can receive the flu shot instead.
- Pregnant individuals.
- Children with severe asthma should not get the nasal spray flu vaccine if their asthma is not well controlled, if they are wheezing, take steroid medicine by mouth or high-dose steroid inhalers, or if they needed medical care for asthma in the last week. LAIV can be used in those with stable non-severe asthma.
- Those with reduced immunity due to illness and/or therapy. It can be used in children with chronic health conditions except those mentioned above.
- Children and adults who will be in close contact with someone who has a very weak immune system (for example, a person who recently had a bone marrow transplant) within 2 weeks of getting the nasal spray flu vaccine should not receive it. They can receive the flu shot instead.

Precautions when administering LAIV :
- those with serious acute febrile illness or nasal congestion should return when symptoms are settled.
- those who have had antiviral medication against influenza within 48 hours before the vaccine is due to be given. Patients should not receive antiviral medication for 2 weeks after the vaccine has been received.

7. What are the risks if influenza vaccine is not received?
If you do not get a flu vaccine, you are more likely to get the flu and spread it to others. The flu can cause serious illness, especially in people who are more likely to get very sick which for some can lead to a hospital stay and a longer recovery.