



As more people spend time indoors throughout the colder months, we can expect to see a seasonal rise in respiratory illnesses such as COVID-19 and the flu.

Vaccination is the best way to keep you and your loved ones safe and healthy throughout respiratory illness season.

It is safe and convenient to receive both the COVID-19 and flu shots at the same time, reducing the need for multiple visits to a doctor, nurse practitioner or local pharmacy.

## To protect yourself and others, especially during respiratory illness season:

- keep up to date on your free COVID-19 vaccine and flu shot
- monitor for signs of illness and stay home when you are sick
- wash and sanitize your hands often
- cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze
- regularly clean high touch surfaces and shared items
- if you are at higher risk of severe infection, consider wearing a tight-fitting, well-constructed mask in indoor public settings
- optimize indoor air quality

You can speak to a health care provider about potential antiviral treatments for COVID-19 (Paxlovid or Remdesivir) and influenza (Oseltamivir) if you become ill and have one or more risk factors that put you at high-risk. For more information, call 811 or visit [Ontario.ca/antivirals](https://ontario.ca/antivirals).

# COVID-19 Vaccines

## Why it is important to get vaccinated to protect against COVID-19

Vaccination is the most effective way to remain protected from the most severe outcomes of COVID-19 infection and decrease the risk of developing post-COVID-19 condition (also known as long COVID).

## When to get a COVID-19 vaccination

The Ministry of Health recommends all individuals aged six months or older receive a COVID-19 vaccine to help ensure protection when peak circulation of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses are expected.

Individuals aged six months and older may receive a COVID-19 vaccine at the same time as routine vaccinations or any other time if it has been a recommended six months since their last dose or confirmed COVID-19 infection.

## Where to get the COVID-19 vaccine

Appointments can be booked for eligible individuals aged six months and older through:

- participating pharmacies (for individuals aged two years and older)
- the COVID-19 vaccination portal
- the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre at 1-833-943-3900 (TTY for people who are deaf, hearing-impaired or speech-impaired: 1-866-797-0007), available in more than 300 languages, Monday to Friday (excluding holidays) from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time
- public health units using their own booking system
- participating primary care providers
- Indigenous-led vaccination clinics

## Where to get more information about the COVID-19 vaccine

- [Ontario.ca/covidvaccines](https://ontario.ca/covidvaccines)
- The Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre at 1-833-943-3900 to speak with an agent (TTY: 1-866-797-0007)
- Health811 online or call 811 (TTY: 1-866-797-0007 toll free) for health advice and information 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- The VaxFacts+ Clinic to speak with a trusted physician from the Scarborough Health Network at [shn.ca/vaxfacts](https://shn.ca/vaxfacts)

# Flu Shots

## Why it is important to get a flu shot

The flu can be serious and can lead to complications resulting in a hospital stay, especially among seniors and young children. Complications can include pneumonia or heart attacks. In some cases, it can result in death. The flu shot is your best defense against getting the flu.

## When to get the flu shot

You should get a flu shot as soon as it is available, as it takes about two weeks following immunization to develop protection. As protection wanes over time and influenza strains change frequently, it is important to get the flu shot every year.

## Where to get the flu shot

- doctor or nurse practitioner
- some local public health units
- participating pharmacies (for individuals aged two and older)

## Flu shots for seniors

If you're 65 and older, there are three different flu shots available:

- The standard dose vaccine that protects against four strains of flu virus
- The adjuvanted vaccine that protects against three strains of flu virus and contains an adjuvant (a substance added to a vaccine that helps the recipient develop an improved immune response)
- The high-dose vaccine, that protects against four strains of flu virus, but in higher doses

All three flu vaccine types are safe, effective and offer strong protection to seniors. Talk to your doctor, nurse practitioner, pharmacist or public health unit about which option is best for you.

## Where to get more information about the flu vaccine

- [Ontario.ca/flu](https://ontario.ca/flu)
- Health811 online or call 811 (TTY: 1-866-797-0007 toll free) for health advice and information 24 hours a day, seven days a week