

THE FLU - PROTECT YOURSELF, YOUR FAMILY AND YOUR COMMUNITY

Seasonal influenza (*flu*) is a common infection of the airways and lungs that can easily spread among people. When someone with the flu sneezes or coughs, the virus can travel through the air and others can breathe it in. The virus can also land on surfaces such as doorknobs, toys and phones. If a person touches something with the flu virus on it and then touches their eyes, nose or mouth, they can get the flu.

In Canada, the flu season usually runs from November to April.



Flu vs. common cold

A cold usually comes on gradually over the course of a day or two. Generally, it leaves you feeling tired, sneezing, coughing and a runny nose. You often don't have a fever, but when you do, it's only slightly higher than normal. Colds usually last three to four days, but can hang around for 10 days to two weeks.

Flu, on the other hand, comes on suddenly and hits hard. You will feel weak and tired and you could run a fever as high as 40°C. Your muscles and joints will probably ache; you will feel chilled and could have a severe headache and sore throat. Getting off the couch or out of bed will be a chore. The fever may last three to five days, but you could feel weak and tired for two to three weeks.

The symptoms of the flu and the common cold can be very similar but, unlike a case of the common cold, the flu can lead to serious health problems like pneumonia.

SYMPTOM DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A COLD AND THE FLU

SYMPTOMS	COLD	FLU
Fever	Rare	Common, high (39 –40°C) Starts suddenly; lasts 3-4
General aches &	Sometimes; usually mild	Often; can be severe
Muscle aches	Sometimes; usually mild	Often; can be severe
Feeling tired &	Sometimes; mild	Common; may last 2-3 weeks or more
Fatigue (extreme)	Unusual	Common; starts early
Sneezing	Common	Sometimes
Complications	Can lead to sinus congestion or earache	Can lead to pneumonia and respiratory failure; worsen a current chronic respiratory condition; can be life-threatening
Chest discomfort	Sometimes; mild to moderate	Common; can be severe

PROTECTION AGAINST THE FLU

The flu (influenza) is a contagious virus that anyone can get. But there are several things you can do to protect yourself from catching it, or spreading it to others.

The flu shot is your best defense...



The flu shot is:

- ⇒ safe (*including kids and if you are pregnant or breastfeeding*)
- ⇒ free
- ⇒ available from your Doctor, Nurse Practitioner, Community Health Nurse, pharmacies
- ⇒ proven to reduce the number of doctor visits, hospitalizations and deaths related to the flu
- ⇒ different each year because the virus changes frequently – so you need to get it every fall

Flu season runs from late fall to early spring. Be sure to get your flu shot as soon as possible because it takes two weeks to take effect.

Flu shots are available at Naandwechige-Gamig Wikwemikong Health Centre.

Between October 2017 and December 2017, 412 flu shots were administered to community members through the Wikwemikong Health Centre.

IF YOU GET THE COLD OR THE FLU

Wash your hands often...

Even after getting the flu shot, washing with soap and water for at least 15 seconds helps prevent the spread of the virus, which can live on your hands for up to 3 hours. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer (*gel or wipes*) that contains at least 60% alcohol.



Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze...

Use a tissue and throw it out rather than putting it in your pocket, on a desk or table. If you don't have a tissue, cough into your upper sleeve



Don't touch your face...

The flu virus spreads when people with the flu cough, sneeze or talk and droplets enter your body through your eyes, nose or mouth.



Stay at home when you're sick...

Viruses spread more easily in group settings, such as businesses, schools and nursing homes.



Clean and disinfect surfaces and shared items...

Viruses live on hard surfaces like countertops, door handles, computer keyboards and phones for up to 8 hours



WHO IS MOST AT RISK FROM THE FLU

Complications from the flu can include pneumonia, which is a serious illness. Flu causes about 12,200 hospitalizations and 3,500 deaths in Canada each year.

Some people are more vulnerable to complications or hospitalization from the flu:

- ⇒ Babies under 6 months are too young to get the flu shot, but they'll get some protection if their parent gets the flu shot while pregnant
- ⇒ Children under five years of age because their immune systems are developing, and their airways are small and more easily blocked
- ⇒ People over 65 years old, because their immune systems are weaker and they may have an underlying condition that increases their risk
- ⇒ Pregnant people, because their immune system, heart and lungs change – especially later in pregnancy – and makes it harder to fight infection
- ⇒ People with underlying health conditions, such as asthma, heart disease or diabetes

Symptoms

Symptoms typically appear 1 to 4 days after you've been exposed to the virus but it's contagious right away so you can still catch it from someone who shows no symptoms yet. Most otherwise 'healthy people' will recover within 7 to 10 days.

You may have caught the flu if you have:

- fever
- chills
- cough
- runny eyes
- stuffy nose
- sore throat
- headache
- muscle aches
- extreme weakness and tiredness
- loss of appetite



Some people may have diarrhea or vomiting, though this is more common in children than adults.

If you get the flu, be sure to...

- ⇒ stay home and get plenty of rest
- ⇒ drink lots of fluids (*but avoid caffeine or alcohol & tobacco*)
- ⇒ speak to your doctor or nurse practitioner about over-the-counter medications that can help you feel better; do not give acetylsalicylic acid (ASA or Aspirin®) to children or teenagers under the age of 18
- ⇒ treat muscle pain using a hot water bottle or heating pad; apply heat for short periods of time
- ⇒ take a warm bath
- ⇒ gargle with a glass of warm salt water or suck on hard candy or lozenges
- ⇒ use spray or saline drops for a stuffy nose

SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IF...

- ⇒ you have shortness of breath, rapid breathing or difficulty breathing
- ⇒ you feel chest pain
- ⇒ your symptoms get worse
- ⇒ you are in a high-risk group and develop flu symptoms

HELP IS JUST A PHONE CALL AWAY

You can call Telehealth at 1-866-797-0000 to talk to a registered nurse 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You do not need to provide your OHIP number and all information is confidential.



You can also contact us here at Naandwechige-Gamig Wikwemikong Health Centre during regular business hours: Monday-Friday; 8am-4pm; 705-859-3164.

If we are able to book an appointment for you to come in, you WILL need to bring your OHIP card.

Call us to find out dates and times for our flu shot clinics.



Fight **THE** Flu

Don't get the flu. Don't spread the flu.

GET VACCINATED