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Flu shots now available

The annual province-wide flu shot campaign is underway in Ontario, and residents are reminded ?the influenza vaccine remains the best protection against the flu virus.?

Starting this week, the free flu vaccine is available for all Ontarians at their health care providers' offices, participating public health units and at community and workplace flu immunization clinics. It is also available from trained pharmacists at 2,500 pharmacies across Ontario for anyone five years of age and older.

This year, children and youth aged two to 17 years will also be able to get the flu vaccine in the form of a nasal spray instead of an injection. According to Health Canada, the nasal spray flu vaccine will help to offer ?broader protection against four flu viruses instead of three.? The added protection is against an additional strain of type-B influenza which affects children and youth more frequently than adults.

Parents will still have the option to vaccinate their children using an injection. The new injection for children and youth aged six months to 17 years will also protect against the same four viruses as the new nasal spray.

Influenza, or the ?flu?, is a serious respiratory infection that can lead to hospitalization and even death, particularly for children under five, pregnant women, seniors and people with underlying health conditions.

It takes about two weeks for the flu vaccine to give you protection against flu viruses.

Preventing the flu through immunization is part of the government's plan to build a better Ontario.

Washing your hands, sneezing into your sleeve, and staying home when you're sick are also great options to reduce the risk of catching, or spreading the flu.

?The flu vaccine is your best defense against the flu. That's why we're reminding Ontarians to get the flu shot this season and to get it early, especially young children and seniors who are the most vulnerable to serious complications. And it's also why we're giving parents more options this year when it comes to getting their kids vaccinated. The flu vaccine is free, easy to get and the best way to stay healthy this flu season,? said Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

In Shelburne, flu shot clinics, are being hosted by: Shelburne Town Pharmacy, Loblaw Pharmacy ? No Frills, or drop-in for your free flu shot at the Public Health office in Orangeville from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

By Wendy Gabrek