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Export date: Sat Oct 31 4:24:40 2026 / +0000 GMT

# Ottawa Journal: It?s flu season

Late fall brings gray skies, falling leaves, and of course, the flu season. Each year, there are different strains of the flu which can effect each of us differently, making some very sick. There are many ways we can guard ourselves against the flu, but one easy and important way is to receive the flu shot.

The flu vaccine or flu shot is a safe and effective measure to prevent the flu. It helps to save lives because it protects us from the virus if we're exposed to it, it prevents us from becoming very ill, and assists in protecting others against the flu because it reduces the chances of spreading the virus around. A common misconception is that the shot may cause the flu; however, this is not the case. The majority of people do not suffer from side effects after receiving the shot and severe side effects are quite rare.

According to the Healthy Canadians website (www.healthycanadians.gc.ca), everyone six months and older should receive the flu shot. It's most important for people who are at high risk of complications, such as those with health conditions such as: cancer, diabetes, heart disease, lung disease, or obesity; people 65 years and older; people who live in nursing homes or other long-term care facilities; children under 5 years of age; pregnant women; and Aboriginal peoples to receive the flu shot.

Some individuals are more likely to spread the flu to those at high risk of complications. These people include: those who are in close contact with those identified higher risk groups, such as: family, household members, caregivers; those who care for or are expecting a newborn baby during flu season; health care workers; child care workers; those who provide services to people at high risk in closed settings, such as crew on a ship.

It's also important to receive a new flu shot each year because its prevention isn't infinite and therefore, a new shot each season is needed to remain protected. Furthermore, the strain of the flu virus can change from year to year and medical professionals develop a new vaccine to ensure we're protected as much as possible from the virus of that season.

There are other things we can do to protect ourselves from the flu in addition to receiving the flu shot. They include common sense measures, such as: washing our hands regularly; coughing and sneezing into the bend of our arms and not our hands; avoid touching our nose, mouth, or eyes with our hands; disinfecting surfaces that we touch regularly; eating a healthy diet; and receiving plenty of sleep.

The flu shot combined with common sense measures can help guard against the dreaded flu and make for a more enjoyable fall. For more information on the flu shot, please visit the Healthy Canadians website.

I would also like to express my deep appreciation and gratitude for re-electing me as your Member of Parliament on October 19, 2015. It has been a great honour and privilege to represent Dufferin-Caledon since 2004 and I will continue to represent your best interests in the House of Commons in Ottawa in the upcoming 42nd Parliament.

**By David Tilson, MP**