

Get the flu shot, not the flu

Each year in Canada the influenza virus is responsible for anywhere from 2000-8000 deaths. Influenza (the flu) usually comes on quickly with symptoms such as a high fever, headache, aches and pains, severe weakness and fatigue, a sore throat, and a cough with congestion. It can lead to serious complications such as pneumonia or respiratory failure. The flu can also worsen a chronic condition such as asthma. Very young children and those over the age of 65 years are at higher risk for developing complications.

Influenza (the flu) has a big impact on our society and yet many individuals do not bother to get immunized! A recent national survey was completed to identify why only one third of Canadians have the annual seasonal influenza vaccine. Those who did not get vaccinated last year were asked why they didn't get the flu shot. The most common reasons identified were people didn't think it was necessary or they hadn't gotten around to it.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the influenza vaccine (the flu shot) is provided and recommended free of charge for those over the age of 60, children from 6 months up to the age of 59 months, aboriginal people, healthcare workers, those with chronic health conditions, essential workers for example policemen, pregnant women, those who live with someone with a chronic condition such as diabetes, and people who live in a nursing home.

Many of us take our good health for granted and have bounced back quite well from influenza. That may not always be the case for you or your family. If you have young children in your home, have someone in your household with a chronic condition, or visit elderly parents or grandparents, not having your influenza vaccination can impact their health. You may pass the flu along to others before you have symptoms or realize you are sick yourself.

This year make an effort to protect yourself and those around you by having your influenza vaccination. The vaccine is safe and effective. The flu shot is available this month, October. Don't sit on the sidelines this year. Get the flu shot, not the flu.

Please call your family physician or your local Public Health Clinic, Western Health to have your influenza vaccination. For further information, visit www.westernhealth.nl.ca for clinic schedules in the Western region.

Peggy Allan, Communicable Disease Nurse