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Ontario Providing Free Flu and COVID-19 Vaccines Across the Province

To protect Ontario families and communities during respiratory illness season, everyone six months and older can now receive their flu and COVID-19 vaccines at participating pharmacies, public health units and doctor and nurse practitioner offices across Ontario.

"Getting immunized is one of the most effective ways to protect yourself, your loved ones and our communities," said Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. "As we head into respiratory illness season, I encourage everyone to stay up to date with their flu and COVID-19 vaccines, which are free, safe, effective and available across the province."

Staying up-to-date with your routine and recommended immunizations is the best way to protect yourself and your community this fall and winter. Getting both the COVID-19 and the flu vaccines at the same time is safe and recommended to avoid multiple trips to a

health-care provider.

The free adult RSV immunizations, Abrysvo® or Arexvy, are also available and recommended to everyone 75 years of age and older, building on last year's expansion of the RSV prevention programs that also include:

Certain high-risk adults aged 60+ such as residents of long-term care homes or retirement homes

Infants less than eight months of age born April 1 or after

High-risk children less than 24 months of age

Pregnant women have the option to receive the RSV vaccine Abrysvo®, which can help provide protection to infants at birth.

Alternatively, eligible newborns, infants and high-risk children can receive the Beyfortus® immunization.

"Immunization remains one of the most powerful tools in our toolbox to prevent serious illness and hospitalizations," said Dr. Kieran

Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health. "Getting your flu, COVID-19 and RSV vaccines, if eligible, this fall is safe, convenient, and helps protect our most vulnerable populations. I encourage everyone to take advantage of the free vaccines available across the province."

Immunizations in Ontario's routine immunization schedule are provided free of charge if you meet the eligibility criteria. If you are unsure about which immunizations you or your family have received or are eligible for, talk to a health-care provider or your local public health unit.

Through Your Health: A Plan for Connected and Convenient Care, the Ontario government is providing people with the tools they need to keep themselves and their loved ones safe and healthy.

To receive protection from currently circulating strains of respiratory illness, it is recommended you get the COVID-19 and flu vaccines

annually each fall.

Immunizations help prevent infection and can help reduce the severity of illness if you do become sick.

While immunization is the best way to protect yourself and others from respiratory illness, there are additional steps you can take to help keep yourself, your friends, family and your community healthy, including washing your hands often, covering your mouth when you cough or sneeze, cleaning surfaces and shared items regularly, and staying at home when sick.

Children under 2 years old cannot get a flu shot at a pharmacy and not all pharmacies choose to administer COVID-19 vaccines to younger age groups such as those less than 5 years old. Public health units and primary care providers may offer additional options for vaccination for children 6 months to under 5 years old.

The province recently expanded free RSV immunization to everyone 75 years of age and older, in addition to eligible high-risk groups aged 60+. Free RSV immunization is available to protect eligible infants less than 8 months of age at the time of immunization and high-risk children less than 24 months of age. There is also the option to receive immunization during pregnancy to protect infants at birth.

Talk to a health-care provider about co-administration of COVID-19 and flu vaccines, and for RSV if you are eligible. Currently, pharmacies do not administer free RSV immunizations as part of Ontario's publicly funded immunization program.

Availability of immunizations may vary across providers. Call ahead to ensure your provider has supply before going.

Visit Health811 online or call 811 (TTY: 1-866-797-0007 toll free) for free health advice and information 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"Staying up-to-date with routine and recommended immunizations helps protect the health and safety of our long-term care staff, residents and their caregivers. Our government's free immunization programs, combined with effective infection and prevention control practices in our long-term care homes, help protect residents so they can get the quality of care and quality of life they need and deserve."

- Natalia Kusendova-Bashta
Minister of Long-Term Care

"I encourage all seniors to get their COVID-19 and flu vaccines. Programs like this help seniors to live happy, healthy and independent lives in our communities."

- Raymond Cho
Minister for Seniors and Accessibility

"As another respiratory illness season begins, Ontario pharmacists are proud to help make it simple and convenient for people across the province to get their flu and COVID-19 vaccines. As trusted and accessible health-care providers, pharmacists are proud to continue to support Ontario's vaccination efforts by making it easy for people to get protected close to home."

- Justin Bates
CEO, Ontario Pharmacists Association

"Ontario's doctors strongly encourage everyone to get their flu and COVID-19 vac-

cines this season. These vaccines are safe, effective, and one of the best ways to protect the most vulnerable members of our communities. Getting vaccinated now helps prevent serious disease later and eases pressure on our health-care system during respiratory illness season."

- Dr. Zainab Abdurrahman
President, Ontario Medical Association

"Ontario's family physicians are here not just to treat illness, but to prevent it. Staying up to date on your flu and COVID-19 vaccines helps protect everyone. If you have questions about seasonal or routine vaccinations, family physicians are here to help guide your choices. Together, we can keep our families and communities healthy and out of hospitals."

- Deepy Sur
CEO, Ontario College of Family Physicians

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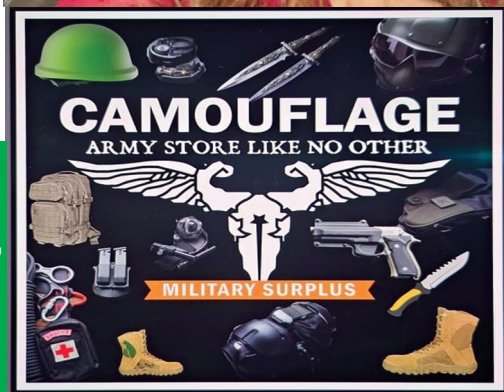
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