

Protect yourself this flu season



by Regional Chair Gary Carr

This influenza (flu) season has been very different from last year. So far, there have been fewer cases of the flu and less media coverage. However, that doesn't mean we should not take action to protect ourselves and our loved ones from the flu. There have been confirmed cases of the flu in Halton and the surrounding regions. It is not too late to be vaccinated, and there is every reason to be immunized.

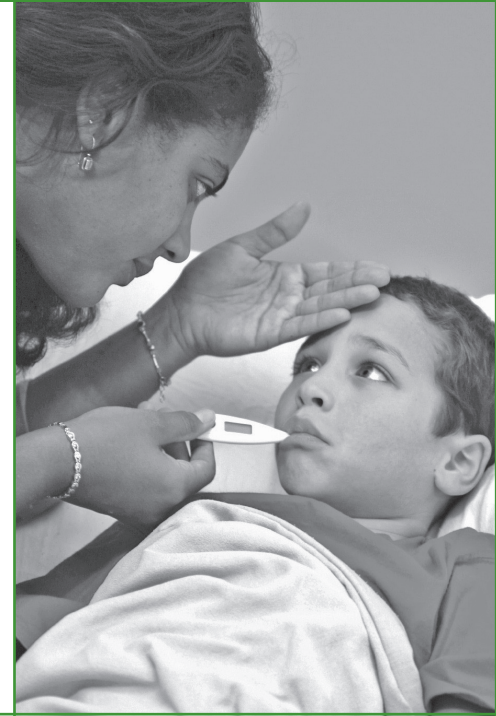
People of all ages can get the flu. The flu virus is very contagious and spreads easily from person to person either by coughing or sneezing, or by touching objects recently touched by someone with the illness. Typically the illness lasts for about a week, although the cough

and tired feeling may continue longer. For certain people, influenza can worsen a current medical condition such as heart or lung disease. It can also lead to pneumonia.

Influenza is a respiratory infection caused by a virus. Colds, vomiting and diarrhea illnesses, and other infections are often confused with the flu, but are caused by different viruses or in some cases bacteria.

The risks of complications, hospitalizations and deaths from influenza are higher among people 65 years of age and older, pregnant women, Aboriginal peoples, those who are morbidly obese, children under five years of age and people of any age with certain health conditions.

For more information on the flu, please dial 311 or call Halton Region at 905-825-6000, toll free 1-866-442-5866 or TTY 905-827-9833 or visit www.halton.ca/flu.



Three keys to flu prevention: immunization, personal protection and self-isolation.

- Immunization is the best way to protect against influenza and from spreading the virus to others in the community. Everyone six months of age and older is eligible to receive the free immunization every year. The vaccine is updated every year with two influenza A strains and one influenza B strain. Currently one of the influenza A strains is circulating in Halton Region.
- Personal protective measures are an effective way to prevent catching or spreading illnesses such as the flu. This includes frequent hand washing with soap and warm water for a minimum of 15 seconds, using an alcohol based hand sanitizer, coughing and sneezing into your sleeve, or using a tissue and disposing of it immediately and washing your hands. Frequent cleaning and disinfecting of commonly touched surfaces such as door knobs, telephones, computers or remote controls is also helpful.
- If you are sick, stay home! Many people lead very busy lives and feel they can't miss a day of work or school. However, staying home from work or school when you are sick is one of the best ways to prevent spreading the flu to those around you and resting is a key element to recovery.

There are many ways to get your flu immunization such as at physicians' offices, workplaces, some pharmacies and at walk-in clinics. The Halton Region Health Department has one more clinic scheduled in December and two clinics scheduled in January. Take the opportunity to get immunized. Protect yourself, your loved ones and those around you against influenza.

Cold or seasonal flu?

Colds do not generally result in serious health problems such as pneumonia or bacterial infections. Children may also experience the croup, ear infections, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea when they have the flu – symptoms that are not common in adults.

SYMPTOM	COLD	FLU
Fever	Rare	Usual, high fever (39°C - 40°C or 102°F - 104°F); sudden onset, lasts 3-4 days. Note: the elderly and people who have a weakened immune system may not develop a fever.
Headache	Rare	Usual, can be severe
Muscle aches & pains	Sometimes, generally mild	Usual, often severe
Tiredness & weakness	Sometimes, generally mild	Usual, severe, may last 2-3 weeks or more.
Extreme fatigue	Unusual	Usual, early onset, can be severe.
Sneezing	Common	Sometimes
Cough/chest discomfort	Sometimes, mild to moderate	Common, can become moderate to severe. Cough may last for weeks.
Complications	Can lead to sinus congestion or infection, and ear aches.	Can lead to pneumonia, can worsen a current chronic condition, can be life threatening.

Seasonal flu immunization clinic schedule

Halton Regional Centre Auditorium
1151 Bronte Road
Oakville

- Wednesday, December 15
4 p.m. - 8 p.m.
- Thursday, January 6
4 p.m. - 8 p.m.
- Thursday, January 20
4 p.m. - 8 p.m.

Halton Region Meeting Schedule

Dec. 8, 10:00 a.m. Inaugural Meeting of Council
Dec. 14, 9:30 a.m. Health & Social Services Cte
Dec. 15, 9:30 a.m. Planning & Public Works Cte
Dec. 15, 1:30 p.m. Administration & Finance Cte
Dec. 22, 9:30 a.m. Regional Council
Dec. 24 - 31 Office holiday closure

Meetings can be viewed at www.halton.ca.

Please let us know as soon as possible if you will have an accessibility or accommodation need at a Halton Region hosted event or meeting.

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