



Flu Shot Fact Sheet

Influenza Vaccination

- Seasonal influenza is an acute respiratory viral infection caused by influenza viruses that spread easily from person to person and circulate in all parts of the world.ⁱ
- Influenza vaccination is the most effective way to prevent disease. Safe and effective vaccines are available and have been used for more than 60 years. Influenza vaccine provides protection, even when circulating viruses may not exactly match the vaccine viruses, by reducing severity of disease and incidence of complications and deaths.ⁱⁱ

Influenza in Newfoundland and Labrador

- During the 2016-2017 flu season, there were 517 laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza, 202 hospitalizations, 29 ICU admissions and 13 deaths reported as of week 25 (June 18– June 24, 2017).ⁱⁱⁱ
- In the last three years, there were a total of 45 influenza-related deaths.^{iv}
- During the 2015-2016 flu season the average age of those hospitalized due to influenza was 51.9 years and the average age of those admitted to the ICU was 54.9 years.^v

Patient Preference

- In May 2017, NMLA commissioned Corporate Research Associates to poll a representative sample of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians on their attitudes towards the flu shot. When asked where they would most prefer to receive the flu shot, participants reported the following:
 - 46% said a doctor's office
 - 33% said a public health clinic
 - 12% said a pharmacy
 - 8% had no preference
 - 2% did not know
- Of those who said the doctor's office, the top two reasons cited by participants was their established relationship with the provider (31%) followed by better accessibility (15%).

Influenza Vaccination in NL

- According to Statistics Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador has the second-lowest rate for influenza vaccinations of all provinces and territories. The most recent data from 2014 indicates that immunization rate in this province was 27.8%, compared to the national average of 32.5%.^{vi}
- For the 2016-2017 influenza season, there were 149,970 doses of influenza vaccines distributed throughout the province. Of those, 106,177 doses were reported as administered (this number is likely higher as the Department of Health and Community Services relies on self-reported tally sheets from all clinics, long-term care facilities, health care workers, pharmacists and physicians to calculate the number of vaccinations administered. The government acknowledges there is under-reporting.)
- The four regional health authorities received the following doses of influenza vaccine:
 - Eastern Health – 81,620 with at least 59,619 administered
 - Central Health – 30,700 with at least 20,772 administered
 - Western Health – 27,220 with at least 17,703 administered
 - Labrador-Grenfell Health – 10,430 with at least 8,083 administered
- **Doses Distributed to Doctors:** Of the 149,970 doses of influenza vaccines distributed throughout the province, 62,813 (42%) were distributed to physicians.
- The following doses of influenza were distributed to physicians by region:
 - Eastern – 45,584 (56%)
 - Central – 8,554 (28%)
 - Western – 8,675 (32%)
 - Labrador-Grenfell – 0
- **Doses Administered by Doctors:** Of the 106,177 doses of influenza vaccines administered throughout the province, 48,131 (45%) or nearly half, were administered by physicians. This number is likely higher as it only accounts for self-reported vaccinations.
- In 2016/17, pharmacists billed the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program (NLPDP) for 3,757 (3.5%) influenza vaccinations for a total cost of \$48,841. Only NLPDP clients qualify for coverage of pharmacist-delivered flu shots. All non-NLPDP clients must pay privately for pharmacist-delivered influenza vaccines.
- The remaining 54,289 (51%) publicly-funded flu shots were administered by other groups including community health programs, long-term care and occupational health programs.

- Fee-for-service family doctors bill MCP \$17.16 for patients who book an appointment for the sole purpose of getting the flu shot. If the patient receives the flu shot as part of a regular office visit where other medical issues are discussed, the doctor does not bill MCP for the flu shot. The doctor instead bills MCP \$32.20 for the office visit. Doctors cannot bill both fees at the same time for the same patient.
- In 2016/17, MCP was billed \$496,233 for 29,352 flu shots administered by physicians. The remaining flu shots delivered by physicians were delivered as part of regular office visits where other medical issues were addressed. In these instances, physicians did not bill MCP for administering the flu shot.
- While NLMA does not have a cost breakdown for each RHA, documents obtained through Access to Information show that Eastern Health will require an additional \$227,000 to accommodate patients no longer vaccinated by physicians this flu season.
- It costs Eastern Health roughly \$9 per immunization. If this cost is consistent across other RHAs, it could cost between \$355,000 and \$400,000 to accommodate the 39,500 to 44,500 patients that will be displaced from physicians this year.

Who should get the Flu Shot?

- The National Advisory Committee on Immunizations (NACI) recommends that all people six months of age and older should get vaccinated against the flu every year.
- People at high risk of influenza-related complications or hospitalization include:
 - Healthy pregnant women, at any stage of pregnancy;
 - All children 6 months to 5 years of age;
 - People 65 years of age and older;
 - People of any age who are residents of nursing homes or other chronic care facilities;
 - Aboriginal Peoples;
 - People who live with, or care for, high risk individuals; and,
 - Adults and children with the following chronic health conditions:
 - Diabetes and other metabolic diseases;
 - Heart and cardiac disorders;
 - Chronic lung disorders (e.g. asthma, COPD, cystic fibrosis, etc.);
 - Cancer;
 - Immunosuppressed (people taking cancer drugs or people with HIV/AIDS);
 - Liver disease;
 - Kidney disease;
 - Blood disorders;
 - Neurologic or neurodevelopment conditions; or,
 - Morbid obesity (BMI \geq 40).

i *Influenza (Seasonal) Fact Sheet*, World Health Organization, November 2016.

ii Ibid.

iii *2016/2017 Respiratory Weekly, Week 25, June 18 – June 24, 2017*, Department of Health and Community Services, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador,

<http://www.health.gov.nl.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/informationandsurveillance.html#influenza>

iv *2016/2017 Respiratory Weekly, Week 25, June 18 – June 24, 2017*, Department of Health and Community Services, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador,

<http://www.health.gov.nl.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/informationandsurveillance.html#influenza>

2015/2016 Influenza Report, Department of Health and Community Services, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, http://www.health.gov.nl.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/flu/Seasonal_Influenza_Report_2015_2016.pdf, *2014/2015 Influenza Report*, Department of Health and Community Services, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador,

http://www.health.gov.nl.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/flu/Seasonal_Influenza_Report_2014_2015.pdf

v *2015/2016 Influenza Report*, Department of Health and Community Services, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador,

http://www.health.gov.nl.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/flu/Seasonal_Influenza_Report_2015_2016.pdf,

vi Influenza immunization, less than one year ago by sex, by province and territory, Statistics Canada, Last modified: 2016-03-07

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/101/cst01/health102b-eng.htm>.