

Influenza has arrived in the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark Counties Health Unit area

Across the country, influenza activity is increasing sharply. We have had our first individual diagnosed with influenza in Lanark, Leeds and Grenville with more individuals diagnosed in our surrounding area. The flu season usually lasts 6 to 8 weeks.

In Ontario and across both Canada and the States, the most common type of influenza A circulating is H3N2 which, in the past, can cause very serious illness among seniors, young children, and people with chronic health problems. The flu vaccine does include a component against H3N2.

Influenza (the flu) is a virus that can lead to a serious illness with symptoms of fever, cough, headache, muscle and joint aches, extreme fatigue and sore throat. The flu virus spreads easily to other people by droplets made when people with influenza cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouth, nose or eyes of people who are nearby. A person might also get the flu by touching something that has the influenza virus on it (such as someone's unwashed hands, toys, shopping cart) and then touching their own mouth, eyes or nose.

The best protection against influenza is immunization. Immunization is recommended for everyone over 6 months of age. When you get the flu shot, you are protecting not only yourself, but your family, friends and co-workers. Also, if you are around people who might become seriously ill from influenza, then you are also protecting them.

Getting immunized against influenza is easy, convenient and free. The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit has just completed their community clinics; however the flu shot continues to be available at your health care provider's office or at local pharmacies throughout Leeds, Grenville & Lanark (for those ≥ 5 years). Check out the list of 35 participating pharmacy locations at www.healthunit.org or call 1-800-660-5853.

Keep in mind that after you get your flu shot, it takes about 2 weeks for you to be fully protected, so it's a great idea to get the vaccine at the beginning of the influenza season! Remember also to wash your hands, use hand sanitizer, clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, cover your coughs and sneezes and stay home if you are sick.

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