

Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit

MEDIA RELEASE
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FLU SEASON IS FAST APPROACHING – What you need to know!

Influenza is a preventable illness that can be very dangerous to some individuals. Because influenza is extremely contagious and is capable of spreading rapidly from person to person, it is important for individuals to follow these steps to protect themselves as well as others in the community: **Get a flu shot, wash your hands, use hand sanitizer, keep frequently touched hard surfaces clean and disinfected, cover your cough, and stay home when you are sick.**

Flu vaccine provides adults and children with active immunity against the influenza virus. **The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit recommends annual immunization against influenza for any persons over 6 months of age.** There is a new flu vaccine produced each year to protect against the three strains of influenza most commonly circulating during the flu season. Pregnant women are recommended to receive the influenza vaccine. Children who are over the age of 6 months and under the age of nine and are getting the flu shot for the first time should get a second dose one month later.

Flu season can begin as early as October. It takes approximately two weeks for the flu vaccine to reach maximum protection, so be sure to get the vaccine as soon as it is available.

Certain individuals are at a greater risk for serious complications from the flu. This is especially true for:

- Very young children, especially those 2 years of age and younger
- Pregnant women,
- People over 65, and
- Adults and children with chronic health conditions such as diabetes, respiratory, cardiac, kidney disease or cancer.

The flu shot is the safest way to protect yourself and your family and friends from the influenza virus. The vaccine protects about 70 percent of people who get a flu shot. However, the protection rate in seniors is less, as their immune systems are weaker. You may still get the flu even though you received your flu shot but being vaccinated will help to reduce the severity of your symptoms.

You cannot get the flu from receiving a flu shot. The flu vaccine does not contain live virus and thus is incapable of giving you the flu. Most people have no reaction to having a flu vaccine while some report having tenderness at the injection site for a few days. After receiving a flu shot some people may experience a mild fever, feeling tired, or having muscle aches and this is considered a normal reaction to having a vaccination. It is not the flu.

HOW CAN YOU GET THE INFLUENZA VACCINE?

The Leeds Grenville and Lanark Health Unit WILL NOT be providing Community Clinics this year.

We are recommending that you can get your flu shot at **your local pharmacy or through your Health Care Provider.** Most Pharmacy clinics will be open and available to the public 7 days a week and with evening hours you will need to bring your Health Card to register with any pharmacy clinic. Check out the list of participating pharmacies in the next few weeks at www.healthunit.org. Pharmacies cannot give vaccinations to persons under 5 years of age.

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