Health PEI

Fact Sheet:

Influenza Vaccine - Live Attenuated (LAIV) (Quadrivalent intranasal vaccine)

1. What is influenza?

Influenza is a contagious viral infection which causes fever, headache, muscle and joint pain, sore throat, chest congestion and cough. About 10-20% of Canadians are infected with influenza each year. Infection due to influenza can lead to health complications, the most common being pneumonia. Approximately 3,500 deaths occur annually in Canada due to influenza related illness and complications.

2. Who is recommended to receive the influenza vaccine?

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends influenza vaccine for all Canadians over 6 months of age, with particular emphasis on the following groups:

- people with health conditions, such as: cancer and other immune compromising conditions, diabetes , heart disease, lung disease, obesity, kidney disease, neurologic or neurodevelopment conditions
- children up to 18 years of age undergoing treatment for long periods with acetylsalicylic acid (ASA)
- people 65 years and older
- people who live in nursing homes or other long-term care facilities
- children under 5 years of age
- pregnant women or those planning to get pregnant
- Indigenous peoples
- People who can pass along the flu virus to those at high risk: care givers, health care providers, childcare providers, family and other household members.

The protection against influenza strains in the vaccine is obtained within 2-3 weeks after immunization and lasts for 6-12 months.

3. What is the live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV)?

LAIV is a vaccine administered by intranasal spray. It is the recommended influenza vaccine for **healthy children aged 2-17 years on PEI**. LAIV is administered with half the dose being sprayed into each nostril.

4. What are the contents of LAIV?

LAIV is a live attenuated influenza vaccine containing four strains (two A strains and two B strains) of influenza virus, which are recommended annually for seasonal protection. Traces of non-medicinal ingredients are present to keep the product sterile and stable. The packaging does not contain latex. The full list of contents of the vaccine is available in the product monograph which can be obtained from your health care provider.

5. What are the possible reactions to the LAIV?

The most common side effect of the intranasal influenza vaccine is nasal congestion or runny nose. Some individuals may experience symptoms including cough, decreased appetite, irritability, headache, and slight fever. These reactions are generally mild and last 1-2 days. Acetaminophen (Tylenol® or Tempra®) can relieve these symptoms. If symptoms persist for an extended period of time, contact your health care provider for an assessment.

In very rare instances a serious allergic reaction can occur requiring medical intervention from a health care provider. Your health care provider is able to quickly respond to this allergic reaction by administering adrenaline.

This type of reaction occurs within 15 minutes of receiving the vaccine. **You will be asked to remain in the waiting room for 15 minutes after receiving LAIV**.

6. What are the situations in which LAIV should <u>not</u> be given?

Contraindications to receiving LAIV include:

- children less than 2 years of age.
- those with a history of anaphylaxis to a previous dose or to any ingredient contained in the vaccine, including egg.
- history of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of a previous influenza immunization.
- those currently receiving aspirin therapy or aspirin-containing therapy.
- pregnant women.
- those with severe asthma who 1) are on oral or a high dose of inhaled therapy, 2) are actively wheezing, or 3) required a medical visit in the previous 7 days due to asthma symptoms. LAIV can be used in those with stable non-severe asthma.
- those with reduced immunity due to illness and/or therapy. It can be used in children with chronic health conditions except those mentioned above.

Precautions when administering LAIV :

- those with serious acute febrile illness or nasal congestion should return when symptoms are settled.
- those who have had antiviral medication against influenza within 48 hours before the vaccine is due to be given. Patients should not receive antiviral medication for 2 weeks after the vaccine has been received.
- health care workers (HCW) or others providing care to or in close contact with persons with <u>severely</u> reduced immunity due to illness (eg. bone marrow transplant) and/or therapy should not receive LAIV due to risk of viral shedding after immunization. They may receive the inactivated influenza vaccine.

7. What are the risks if influenza vaccine is not received?

The risk of contracting influenza illness and of spreading it to others is increased when influenza vaccine is not received. Transmission of influenza illness contributes to increased hospitalization and prolonged illness particularly to those who are more vulnerable.