



Lamont Health Care Centre

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P.O. Box 479, 5216-53 Street, Lamont, Alberta T0B



2015 COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER – WINTER EDITION

‘MEDICAL CORNER’

HOW TO DEAL WITH INFLUENZA

by **Dr. Zainool Mohamed, Chief of Medical Staff – LHCC**

As you know winter is almost upon us and once again we have to deal with influenza. There are three types of influenza namely A, B and C. Influenza A and B cause seasonal epidemics. Influenza C causes a mild respiratory illness. Only A and B are in the vaccine.

Symptoms of Influenza: Influenza is characterized by a sudden onset of illness. The symptoms typically include high fever, cough and muscle aches. Sometimes people will get headaches, general aches, chills, loss of appetites, runny nose or chest discomfort with coughing.

One of the most practical ways to avoid getting or spreading influenza is to practice hand hygiene, covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, participating in good health habits like plenty of good sleep, being physically active, managing stress and staying away from work if you are sick to prevent the flu to be spread to others.

It is important to have an immunization because immunity protects not only the person but the entire family and even the community. Immunity is the body's natural way of protecting itself from disease. It is a balanced state of having adequate biological defenses to fight infection or other biological intervention. If immunity occurs in the entire community this results in herd immunity. Herd Immunity is a form of indirect protection of infectious diseases that occurs when a large percentage of the population has become immune to an infection. This is the reason why we have community wide immunization.

This is especially important for people who are immuno-compromised. Those immuno-compromised would be someone who has cancer or some chronic disease or even diabetes. Even immuno-compromised people should also be immunized.

The influenza vaccine is an annual vaccination that is specific for a given year to protect against highly variable influenza viruses. There are ten approved flu vaccines in Canada; seven are trivalent inactive vaccines. This means that they can't give you the flu. There is a live attenuated vaccine and three quadrivalent vaccines. These would be given only in specific situations.

How the vaccines work: Influenza vaccine causes antibodies to develop within the body about two weeks after the vaccinations. These antibodies provide protection against the infection with the dead virus. It imitates the infection and thereby develops a protection against the same infection. It does not cause a disease but

How to Deal with Influenza – continued ..

only causes the body to produce antibodies. Sometimes after getting the vaccine minor symptoms such as fever will occur. This is normal as the body produces immunity. There is no way to get an infection from a dead vaccine.

Presently, the trivalent vaccines which we give in Alberta are Fluviral, Influvac and Fluad. In previous years we have given everybody the flu-viral vaccine as it seemed to work for everybody from childhood all the way to the elderly. Most recently, we have a Fluad vaccine which we are using for people above sixty-five years old as it seems to have fewer side effects.

Mission Statement

We believe that wholeness of body, mind and spirit is God's will for every person.

We are committed to the healing process, the promotion of health

and the provision of compassionate care to all persons.



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Safety of the Influenza Vaccine:

You can't get the flu from the influenza virus vaccine as it is dead.

The live vaccine occurs in the nasal spray. It is a weaker virus so it should not be able to cause influenza illness; however, there is a potential for viral shedding in any live virus. Health care workers are probably better suited to get the inactivated dead vaccine.

Possible Side Effects to the Inactivated Vaccine:

Fever, chills, irritability, tiredness, headache, mild redness where the needle was given, muscle aches and pains. These will usually disappear within the first day.

Possible Reactions to the Live Vaccine:

Runny stuffy nose, decreased appetite, weakness, cough, fever and headache.

Are there any Side Effects to the Flu Vaccine:

This occurs probably within 1/100,000 people so they are extremely rare. Allergies are also of very rare consequence. Unusual and unexpected side effects can occur with any immunizations. These can be related to anaphylaxis which is a severe allergy, ocular respiratory system which is redness of the eye with cough and wheeze but they usually go away in twenty-four hours. People who have had this reaction with influenza vaccines before are likely to have it again but in a much milder form.

My advice to you would be despite some of the side effects it is probably better to get the influenza immunizations in order to protect yourself and your family. Remember that it also confers immunity to the whole community.

I hope you have an enjoyable Christmas!

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