

October 15, 2020

**PROVINCE LAUNCHES NEW FLU VACCINATION CAMPAIGN,
ENCOURAGES MANITOBANS TO ‘ADD A LAYER THIS FALL’ TO PREPARE
FOR CHALLENGING FLU SEASON**

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**Now, More Than Ever.
Get Your Flu Shot: Premier**

As the province prepares for a flu season made more challenging by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Manitoba government is launching a new flu vaccination campaign encouraging all Manitobans to get a flu vaccine this fall to help protect themselves and their loved ones, Premier Brian Pallister announced today.

“It has never been more important for Manitobans to get the flu shot,” said Pallister. “Manitobans have a long and proud history of taking care of each other and facing our challenges together. That is what the flu vaccine does – it protects each of us, and it protects our family, friends and fellow Manitobans. I encourage all Manitobans, especially those at increased risk, their caregivers and close family and friends to get the flu shot this fall.”

The annual influenza vaccination campaign has been revamped this season to take into account the current public health challenges posed by COVID-19. The tag line, ‘Add a Layer This Fall’, encourages Manitobans to add an extra layer of protection as the province prepares to deal with the flu season and COVID-19 at the same time.

The 2020-21 campaign will be targeted to those most vulnerable and their caregivers, including specific outreach to the health-care sector and the public service. In an effort to protect those most at risk and to reduce the strain on the health-care system, the province has increased its vaccination order by 20 per

cent.

“It is recommended that all Manitobans six months of age and older receive their influenza vaccine early in the fall each year, but even more so this year as we deal with a surge in positive COVID cases in Winnipeg and throughout the province,” said Dr. Brent Roussin, Manitoba’s chief provincial public health officer. “We know that simple actions and focusing on the fundamentals can help prevent the spread of disease in our communities and within our health-care facilities. This year it is crucial that we all work together to protect each other, which can be done safely and effectively by getting your influenza vaccine, staying home when you’re sick, practising good hand hygiene, covering your cough, physical distancing and wearing a mask.”

A record 26.3 per cent of Manitobans registered with Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living received the vaccine last flu season. Manitobans who received the vaccine last year are encouraged to get it again, as are those getting it for the first time.

In 2017, Manitoba became the first province to offer a high-dose version of the influenza vaccine and many provinces have followed suit since then. Last year, Manitoba ordered 11,500 high-dose influenza vaccines and for the 2020-21 influenza season, the province will order up to 21,500 high-dose vaccines. Additional vaccines may be available to purchase if required.

The high-dose influenza vaccine is an injected flu vaccine formulated for people age 65 years and older. Evidence shows the high-dose influenza vaccine protects especially those seniors who are at greater risk of influenza and its complications. Previously, it was only offered to residents of long-term care facilities 65 years of age and older, clients in interim or transitional care beds, respite care clients or unimmunized residents admitted to long-term care facilities during the flu season.

This year, the high-dose influenza vaccine criteria is expanding for the 2020-21

influenza season to allow more seniors to get the high-dose influenza vaccine for free starting this fall. In addition to those who were eligible previously, Manitobans 65 years of age and older who meet one of the following criteria are now also eligible:

- residents of supportive and assisted living housing;
- those who are newly incarcerated or transferred from other federal or out of province correctional facilities;
- those receiving home care services while on a waiting list for admission into a long-term care facility;
- those living on a First Nation or in a remote or isolated community; and
- those living north of the 53rd parallel of latitude.

The flu vaccine and Pneu-P-23 vaccine, which helps protect against pneumococcal disease and is offered free of charge to seniors, is available anywhere flu vaccines are offered (and can be received at the same time) at local public health offices, nursing stations, doctors' offices, community clinics and Access Centres. Pharmacists can also provide immunization services to people seven years of age and older. Manitobans interested in getting the vaccine should contact providers first to ensure they are available.

Manitoba has already begun shipping vaccines to providers and is expected to receive the full provincial vaccine allotment over the next several weeks, barring any external supply or delivery disruptions.

Regional health authorities, with the exception of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, will also soon begin immunization clinics. To find an influenza vaccine clinic near you, visit Manitoba's seasonal influenza website at www.manitoba.ca/health/flu/where.html.

Visit Manitoba's seasonal influenza website at www.manitoba.ca/flu or contact Health Links–Info Santé at 204-788-8200 in Winnipeg or 1-888-315-9257 (toll-free) for more information.

For more information:

- Public information, contact Manitoba Government Inquiry: 1-866-626-4862 or 204-945-3744.
- Media requests for general information, contact Communications Services Manitoba: 204-945-3765.
- Media requests for ministerial comment, contact Communications and Stakeholder Relations: 204-945-4916.