



December 18, 2025

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Influenza season is here. Our goal is to protect the health of children, reduce the spread of illness and ensure you and your children are safe and healthy throughout the winter season.

In recent weeks, we have seen a significant increase in respiratory viruses and illness in our kindergartens and schools. As we spend more time indoors over the winter months, these viruses spread more easily, which may create challenges for everyone to enjoy time together. Illness can send people to hospital, disrupt learning, as well as winter activities like sports and holiday gatherings.

People of all ages can get sick with influenza, but school-aged children experience some of the highest rates of the illness. Children can get severely sick with influenza and spread it to others, even when their own symptoms are mild. This season, Alberta is already seeing an increase in respiratory virus activity and influenza-related hospitalizations, including among children and youth under 19.

In Alberta, children six months and older are encouraged to get the annual influenza vaccine. The influenza vaccine is available to you and your child free-of-charge and can protect elderly grandparents, babies under six months of age, or other family members against the serious consequences of influenza, and will help to keep children, healthy and in school.

We also want to emphasize the importance of keeping children up to date with routine immunizations. With measles circulating both internationally and here in Alberta, it is especially important that your child has received both recommended doses of the measles vaccine. If your child is missing a dose, measles vaccine is available through public health centres.

Influenza and routine childhood vaccines are widely available to all Albertans. If you have questions about how best to protect your family, please reach out to Health Link at 811 or speak with a trusted primary care provider. Appointments for children under five years of age and their families are available at Primary Care Alberta clinics. Influenza only appointments can be booked online (<https://myahsconnect.albertahealthservices.ca/MyChartPRD/openscheduling?specialty=257&hidespecialtysection=1>) or by calling 811. Albertans five years of age and older can receive their influenza vaccine at a participating pharmacy, many of which accept walk-in appointments. Some physician offices also offer influenza vaccines; please contact your physician's office for details.

In addition to getting the vaccine, we encourage you and your children to take the following everyday actions to prevent the spread of respiratory viruses: stay home when feeling sick; avoid

close contact with people who are sick when possible; wash hands frequently with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds; avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands; when someone in the home is sick, clean and disinfect frequently-touched surfaces and items in the home. Individuals who are ill should remain home until they are feeling better and able to participate in normal activities.

Thank you for your ongoing efforts to reduce the impact of influenza in our communities. Your work helps keep families healthy and strengthens the well-being of communities across Alberta.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'V. Suttorp', with a large loop at the end.

Dr. Vivien Suttorp
Chief Medical Officer of Health

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Sookram', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Dr. Sunil Sookram
Outgoing Interim Chief Medical Officer of Health