



NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

Doctors Encourage Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to Get the Flu Shot

For immediate release – October 25, 2018

St. John's – This flu season, physicians in Newfoundland and Labrador encourage everyone over the age of 6 months to get the flu shot.

Seasonal influenza is an acute respiratory viral infection that spreads easily from person to person. Last year, the virus resulted in 342 hospitalizations, 65 ICU admissions and 39 confirmed influenza-related deaths in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The flu shot is the most effective way to prevent influenza. Providing protection, even when the vaccine is not an exact match for circulating viruses, helps reduce the severity of the infection and influenza-related complications.

The flu shot is especially important for people who are at greater risk of complications, such as seniors, young children, pregnant women and those with chronic health conditions like respiratory and immune compromised illnesses. The Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information has developed an interactive map of public influenza vaccination clinic locations in the province, which is available [here](#).

NLMA Calls on Government to Increase Province's Vaccination Rate

Last year, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador decided to stop paying family physicians to administer flu shots under MCP as a means to achieve savings. As a result of this decision, the number of flu shots delivered by physicians dropped from 45% in 2016/17 to approximately 16% during last year's flu season. Some physicians continued to deliver flu shots to patients despite the government's decision.

By increasing the capacity of public health flu shot clinics, the government was able to increase the province's influenza vaccination rate from 20% in 2016/17 to 23.7% during last year's flu season. However, the Newfoundland and Labrador still lags behind most other provinces. According to the most recent data available from Statistics Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador has the second-lowest influenza vaccination rate of all provinces and territories. The province is second only to Quebec for the lowest number of flu shots delivered to people over the age of 12.

"We call on the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to use every means available to increase the province's low influenza vaccination rate, including reinstating flu shot coverage under MCP, to protect against this preventable illness. We should be promoting more access to flu shots, not less," said NLMA President Dr. Tracey Bridger.

"The NLMA supports a strategy where physicians, nurses and pharmacists work collaboratively to increase the flu shot coverage rate. If government had used the combined effort of physicians and other providers with the increased capacity of community health clinics, I believe we could have one of the best vaccination rates in the country, instead of one of the worst."

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