

Influenza Immunization of Medical Laboratory Professionals

POSITION STATEMENT

The Medical Laboratory Professionals' Association of Ontario (MLPAO) supports annual immunization as the most effective method of preventing influenza and its complications.

- Annual immunization should be part of a comprehensive workplace and patient safety strategy.
- Members should be well informed of the risks of the disease to themselves, their family and those they care for.
- Members should also be informed of the risks and benefits of immunization.
- Members should follow their employer's policies on immunization.
- As per the Ontario Human Rights Code, members have the right to refuse immunization.

INFORMATION

Influenza is highly contagious and affects 10-20% of the world's population each year. ^{1,2,3}
Influenza is a serious illness which affects certain population more seriously:

- Infants
- Pregnant women
- Those with chronic illness
- Immunocompromised patient

In Ontario the prevalence of medical risk factors increases progressively with age" ^{1,2}

- 20-64 years: 30%
- ≥50 years: 53%
- ≥65 years: 70%

Population who cannot be immunized

- Babies less than six months old, person who had an anaphylactic reaction to a previous dose or influenza vaccine or is allergic to a vaccine component.
- Immunocompromised patient can generally receive an inactive vaccine, but may not develop immunity.
- Elderly even though immunized, may not develop good levels of immunity from the vaccine.

These vulnerable groups are best protected when their family and community around them are immunized.

Why Immunize Health Care Workers (HCW)

HCW with influenza can be infectious at least one day before their initial symptoms. Most HCW will continue to work if symptoms are mild. One may be subclinical and still be infectious. ²

REFERENCES:

1. Public Health Ontario – The relationship between influenza medical risk factors and age. Technical report March 2017
2. Public Health Agency Canada – An Advisory Committee Statement (ACS). National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) – Canadian Immunization Guide Chapter on Influenza and Statement on Seasonal Influenza Vaccine for 2017-2018. May 2017
3. World Health Organization Influenza Seasonal Fact Sheet November 2016