

# The Importance of Influenza and COVID-19 Vaccines, Including Recommended Boosters

---

## Correctional Centre Workers

Correctional centres are high-risk environments for influenza and COVID-19 outbreaks. This is due to communal living arrangements and increased prevalence of respiratory illness (e.g. asthma), immunosuppression (e.g. HIV infection), and chronic medical conditions in the offender population. COVID-19 and seasonal influenza can lead to severe disease in persons who have chronic disease or are elderly, even when immunized, due to a sub-optimal immune response.

The influenza vaccine has to be given every year because the strains change, and protection is not long-lasting. Correctional workers may become infected with influenza at work and spread it to others, including offenders and family members. Studies show that 5 - 10% of adults and 20 - 30% of children are infected each year. Influenza can be spread even if a person has mild or no symptoms. The vaccine is estimated to provide about 60% protection; results vary by year depending on the relatedness of the circulating and vaccine strains. Even if you are not completely protected after immunization and become ill, the length and severity of illness as well as the amount of virus you might spread may be less.

Because of strain changes and waning immunity, COVID vaccines are recommended annually for health care workers, twice annually for those who are immunocompromised.

If there is an influenza outbreak at a correctional centre and workers have not been immunized, they may be offered antivirals to protect against influenza, which will require a prescription. Health care workers and correctional staff may be restricted from working at the outbreak site until the outbreak is over unless they commence antivirals prior to their next shift.

For more information call 811 Health Link or visit the following webpages:

- [www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans](http://www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans)
- [www.alberta.ca/influenza-the-flu](http://www.alberta.ca/influenza-the-flu)

Thank you for helping to prevent seasonal influenza and COVID-19!