



Guiding the Optometric Profession and Protecting the Public since 1921

Influenza Information Backgrounder

The influenza season typically runs from mid-October to early-July in Alberta. “Flu season” occurs each and every year in countries all over the world; however, it is not referred to as a pandemic such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2019-2020 flu statistics appear to be trending worse than the 2018-2019 year. Influenza statistics in Alberta (as of March 21, 2020 - for the 2019-20 season):

Year	Number of Immunizations	Number of Cases	Number of Hospitalizations	Number of Deaths
2018 – 2019	1,305,470	6082	1391	30
2019 – 2020 (as of March 21, 2020)	1,426,778	8388	1437	36

The Alberta government purchases approximately \$12.5M of influenza vaccine each year. This amount is sufficient to immunize approximately 35% of the Alberta population; however, yearly historical immunization rates in Alberta have ranged from 23% to 31% over the past ten (10) years. This rate lags behind other provinces in total population immunization rates.

Currently, in Alberta, administration of the flu vaccine is performed 55% by pharmacists, 27% by Public Health Nurses and 18% by other providers.

The Alberta College of Optometrists strongly encourages all optometrists, their staff and their families to receive their yearly flu vaccine. The vaccine is available free of charge.

The best protection against Influenza is to receive the flu vaccine each year, wipe surfaces that may be touched by multiple individuals with disposable disinfectant wipes, practice good hygiene, wash your hands regularly with soap and water and stay home when sick.

For additional information, please review the [ACO Immunization Policy](#) on the ACO website or the [Alberta Health Services Influenza](#) webpage.