



Consumers Can Help Prevent
Harmful Medication Incidents

SafeMedicationUse.ca Newsletter

Volume 4 • Issue 9 • December 20, 2013

Get Your Flu Shot – and Keep a Record!

‘Tis the season—and not just for holiday cheer! At this time of year, influenza (flu) viruses can take hold and spoil holiday fun for you and your family. A flu virus can cause serious illness, even in healthy people. Wise Canadians are protecting themselves and helping to prevent the spread of the flu virus by getting an annual flu shot.

Each year’s flu vaccine is different, depending on the types of viruses that are expected to be in circulation. That’s why it’s important to get a flu shot every year.* Flu shots are usually given in the fall, although the “flu season” can last until the following spring. When you receive your flu shot, or any other vaccine, it is important to keep a record. That way, you will know when you should get the next shot.

SafeMedicationUse.ca has received a report about a consumer who came to a flu vaccine clinic at a doctor’s office and was given a flu shot. Later, it was discovered that the consumer had already received a flu shot, two weeks previously. No harm occurred, but getting two doses of flu vaccine within such a short period is not recommended.

SafeMedicationUse.ca recommends that you keep a record of all your immunizations. Update the record whenever you receive a vaccine, and show it to your healthcare providers before receiving any additional vaccines. Taking these steps will help to ensure that you receive your vaccines when they are due. It will also help to prevent you from receiving unnecessary doses. We recommend that you keep your immunization record with your list of medicines or list your vaccines in a separate section within your list of medicines.

Useful forms and an iPhone app that can help you keep track of all your medicines and immunizations are available on the Knowledge is the Best Medicine site www.knowledgeisthebestmedicine.org. Don’t delay: start your list today, and be sure to check it twice!

* A single shot of the flu vaccine once a year is recommended for adults and for most children. Some children, including those between 6 months and 9 years of age who are getting a flu shot for the first time, should receive two doses. Check with your child’s healthcare provider about the recommended schedule for your child.

What’s a Vaccine?

A flu shot is a type of vaccine. Vaccines stimulate your immune system to help your body fight off certain infections. The process of getting a vaccine is known as vaccination, which is sometimes called “immunization”.

Tips for Practitioners

- Encourage your patients and clients to maintain a record of their immunizations.
- Before administering any vaccine, review the person’s immunization record. If an immunization record is not available, ask the person when he or she last had a shot.
- Assist patients to update their lists of medicines and immunizations.