



## **News Release: Free Flu Shots Now Available in Pharmacies Throughout the Province**

**October 25, 2021 St. John's** All residents of the province age five and older can now receive their flu shot in a community pharmacy for free. The Pharmacists' Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (PANL) is reminding everyone of the importance of getting vaccinated against influenza.

"The flu is a serious and contagious respiratory condition that can cause mild to severe illnesses and at times, could lead to death," said Janice Audeau, community pharmacist and PANL President. "The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu shot each year."

With workplaces and schools open, increased travel, larger gatherings and reduced social distancing, the influenza virus will spread easier and quicker this year making getting a flu shot this year more important than ever.

"Last year we had a number of measures in place to help curb the spread of COVID-19, including stay-at-home orders, social distancing, increased handwashing and masking," noted Audeau. "These helped reduce the spread of germs including the flu virus. We don't want people to become complacent and think the flu has gone away. We have to remember that we are in a far different place this year and the flu is expected to be here and spread rapidly."

PANL is also reminding residents that they still need a flu shot even if they are immunized against COVID-19.

"COVID-19 and the flu are caused by two separate viruses and it's important to be immunized against both," added Audeau. "While COVID-19 typically causes a more serious illness than flu, both can be life threatening. There is an increased risk of severe complications from the flu for those who are younger than five years of age, older than 65 years of age, pregnant, or who have chronic diseases or weakened immune systems."

With more than 200 community pharmacies across the province, many open evenings and weekends, pharmacists are ideally situated to once again play a key role in the universal flu vaccination program. Last year, pharmacists administered over 90,400 flu shots - approximately 40% of the total flu shots administered.

"Pharmacists play an important role in the delivery of health care services to residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, and this is another convenient and valuable service they can offer their patients," said Audeau.

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