

It has been a tough year! Although our focus has been on COVID-19 we can't forget that Flu Season is also upon us.

This year, more than ever, protecting yourself from the flu is extremely important. Influenza can be a scary illness to catch, especially when you have Lupus and are taking many immune suppressing medications. In general, the flu vaccine is safe for patients with SLE. It is a well-tolerated vaccine that is inactive meaning individuals **cannot** become sick from receiving this immunization. You should not be receiving the flu vaccine if you are allergic to eggs, have had a previous serious reaction to the vaccine, are under 6 months of age or are recovering from an acute infection/viral illness. Patients who are immunocompromised (Lupus patients), pregnant or planning to become pregnant, elderly or children over the age of 6 months should be receiving this vaccine. The 2020-2021 Flu Vaccine will cover four different strains of the virus including two strains of Influenza A and two strains of Influenza B.

There are common side effects of receiving the vaccine, which include pain at the administration site, nasal congestion or runny nose. If you do experience pain in your arm, you may take acetaminophen to help as long as your medical team feels this is safe. Due to COVID-19 flu shot administration looks a little bit different this year. Shoppers Drug Mart Pharmacies are asking that you make an appointment first before getting your vaccine. There are some other "drive-through" type programs that family doctor's offices are offering – make sure to check with your General Practitioner.

Lupus patients have a lot to keep track of including doctor's visits and lists of medications; to keep track of all your vaccinations try downloading the application CANImmunize on your phone or tablet (available for Iphone and Android). This application provides a fantastic interface and will remind you of when you are due for your next vaccine.

Protect yourself and others, please get your flu shot this season!!

For weekly reports on the upcoming flu season in your area follow this website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/flu-influenza/influenza-surveillance/weekly-influenza-reports.html>