

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

Fall is here and in anticipation of the upcoming flu season we are encouraging you to join us in taking action to prevent and manage flu in our community. As we continue to live with COVID-19, our goal is to protect the health of our children and reduce symptom confusion by minimizing the spread of flu.

**It is more important than ever to reduce the spread of flu.**

Flu vaccination is the single best way to help prevent your child from getting and spreading the flu. Children are more vulnerable to complications and hospitalization from the flu because their immune systems are still developing, and their airways are small and more easily blocked. The Public Health Agency of Canada recommends the flu shot for anyone 6 months of age and older

Parents, caregivers, and those who work closely with children are encouraged to get their own flu shot to help protect the children they interact with.

Public Health recommends getting the flu shot early because it takes **two weeks** to take effect. The flu shot will be widely available in Hamilton in mid-October.

**Where to get the flu vaccine**

This year getting your flu shot may look differently. Primary care providers and pharmacists will have flu shot space set-up to ensure physical distancing requirements are met. Some providers may offer drive-through or walk-through clinics as well. There may be a requirement to pre-book your shot. To find out more about flu shot options in the City of Hamilton, visit [www.hamilton.ca/flu](http://www.hamilton.ca/flu)

**Note:** children 6 months to 4 years old need to get their flu shot from a doctor or nurse practitioner but children 5 years and older can get their flu shot from a pharmacist.






Our schools will continue to practice public health measures such as handwashing and masking to reduce the spread of viruses. In addition to the flu shot, we ask that you take some time to review the tips on staying flu-free this season on the back of this letter.

We appreciate your continued cooperation in helping fight against the flu and keeping our kids healthy.

If you have questions, please contact your healthcare provider, school nurse, or Hamilton Public Health Services (905-546- 2489).

## Other tips to avoid getting – and spreading – the flu

The government of Ontario recommends the following actions to avoid getting and spreading the flu.

	<b>Wash your hands often</b>	Even after getting the flu shot, washing with soap and water for <b>at least 15 seconds</b> helps keep the virus from spreading  If soap and water are not available, use a <b>hand sanitizer</b> (gel or wipes) with at least <b>70% alcohol</b>
	<b>Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze</b>	Use a <b>tissue</b> and <b>throw it out</b> rather than putting it in your pocket, on a desk or table  If you don't have a tissue, cough into your <b>upper sleeve</b>
	<b>Don't touch your face</b>	The flu virus spreads when people with the flu cough, sneeze or talk and <b>droplets enter your body</b> through your <b>eyes, nose or mouth</b>
	<b>Stay at home when you're sick</b>	Viruses <b>spread more easily in group settings</b> , such as businesses, schools and nursing homes
	<b>Clean (and disinfect) surfaces and shared items</b>	<b>Viruses can live for 24 to 48 hours</b> on <b>hard surfaces</b> such as countertops, toys, door handles, computer keyboards and phones

Learn more: [www.hamilton.ca/flu](http://www.hamilton.ca/flu)