Influenza glossary

Adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US
https://www.cdc.gov/flu/glossary/index.htm
and the World Health Organization
http://www.wpro.who.int/emerging_diseases/Glossary_rev_Sept28.pdf?ua=1

Acute respiratory illness
This is a disease that typically affects the airways in the nose and throat (the upper respiratory tract).

Adjuvant
An adjuvant is a substance added to a vaccine to improve the body's immune response. It helps the vaccine protect you better.

Adjuvanted influenza vaccine
This is a vaccine that contains three strains of influenza viruses and is designed to help create a stronger immune response to vaccination in adults 65 years of age and older and children 6 to 23 months of age.

Antibiotic
This is a substance that prevents the growth of bacteria or fungi. As medicines, antibiotics are used to treat bacterial and fungal infections. They are **not** used to treat viruses such as influenza.

Antibody
Your body produces this kind of protein to fight off a foreign substance.

Antigen
An antigen is any foreign substance, usually a protein, that stimulates the body's immune system to produce antibodies.

Antigenic 'drift'
There are two major types of influenza virus that may infect humans: influenza A and B. They are always changing. Antigenic 'drift' refers to small changes in the genes of influenza viruses.

Antigenic 'shift'
There are two major types of influenza virus that may infect humans: influenza A and B. They are always changing. Antigenic 'shift' is a big, abrupt change where different **strains** (see below) of influenza viruses combine to create a new original strain. Such a shift may cause a **pandemic** (see below).

Antiviral
This kind of drug can prevent or treat viral infections.

Attenuated
'Attenuated' means 'weakened.'

Attenuated-virus vaccine

This kind of vaccine contains a live virus that has been weakened through chemical or physical processes. The goal of this vaccine is to produce an immune response without causing disease when you receive the vaccine.

Carrier
This refers to someone who carries and transmits an **antigen** (see above) that may cause infectious disease in another person.

Close contact
This is someone who has come within 2 metres (about 6 feet) of a person confirmed to have influenza or a person who is developing influenza during the time the person was ill (starting one day before symptoms occurred and continuing until the illness ends).

Close proximity
This refers to coming within 2 metres (about 6 feet) of an infected person, infected animal, or contaminated surface, but not touching or handling that person, animal, or surface.

Confirmed influenza case
This refers to someone who tested positive for influenza virus infection after having an approved laboratory test.

Common cold
This is a viral infection of the upper respiratory tract. Colds are not caused by any influenza virus.

Direct contact
Direct contact means handling or touching an object touched by an ill person.

Epidemic
In general, this occurs when influenza activity in a city, country, or other region is higher than normal. Epidemics of influenza are common, and can occur at any time. This is different from **pandemic influenza** (see below).

Effectiveness
Vaccine effectiveness refers to how well a vaccine protects you from illness.

Efficacy
This refers to how well a vaccine protects you from illness in certain— often controlled — conditions.

Hemagglutinin
This is a protein found on the wall of the influenza virus. It binds the virus to the cell that is being infected and is the ‘H’ in influenza virus names.

High-risk group
This refers to a group of people at higher risk of getting an illness or becoming seriously ill, often due to factors such as chronic illness.

High-dose influenza vaccine
This is a kind of vaccine that contains four times the antigen (the part of the vaccine that helps your body build up protection against influenza viruses) of a standard-dose inactivated influenza vaccine. It is designed to give adults 65 years of age and older a better immune response, and therefore, better protection against influenza.

Immunization
This is a process whereby your immune system becomes immune to a disease by taking a vaccine.

Immunogenicity
This refers to the ability of a substance to cause an immune response, or how well the substance causes an immune response.

Inactivated vaccine
An inactivated vaccine is a vaccine made from virus particles, bacteria or other pathogens that have been killed through physical or chemical processes. These killed organisms cannot cause disease.

Influenza
There are two major types of influenza viruses that cause illness in humans: A and B. In Canada, influenza viruses spread more during fall and winter. Symptoms include a sudden high fever, cough, and muscle aches. Other common symptoms are headaches, chills, loss of appetite, fatigue, and sore throat. Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea may also occur. Most people will recover within a week to 10 days. People with chronic disease are at greater risk of more severe illness when they get influenza.

Influenza-like illness
This kind of illness has signs and symptoms that resemble influenza. The term is technical: it describes illness that doctors suspect is influenza but because the person has not been tested, they are not confirmed as having the influenza virus.

Lineage
This applies to Influenza B viruses only. They are not divided into **subtypes** (see below) like influenza A, but are classified by lineages. Today's influenza B viruses belong to one of two lineages: B/Yamagata and B/Victoria.

Long-term care facility
This is a nursing home or assisted-living facility that provides medical and personal care to people who cannot live on their own in the community. People living in this kind of institution are at high risk for influenza infection and the impacts of influenza.

Neuraminidase
This is a protein within the influenza virus that is essential for the spread of the virus throughout the respiratory tract.

Pandemic
This happens when a new influenza A virus spreads from person-to-person (see **person-to-person transmission**, below) around the world and affects a very large number of people. Such a virus might cause an influenza pandemic if it can spread efficiently from person-to-person, instead of just from

animals to people, or from one person to another but no further. A pandemic occurs when most people are not immune to the new virus. People can have some immunity to new or pandemic influenza A viruses if the virus is like an influenza A virus they had in the past. That's why a new influenza A virus that is very different from earlier influenza A viruses is more likely to cause a pandemic. Influenza B viruses do not cause influenza pandemics.

Person-to-person transmission
This is also called human-to-human transmission. It happens when an influenza virus spreads from one person to another (instead of from an animal to a person, for example). **Seasonal influenza** (see below) viruses are influenza A and B viruses that spread and cause illness during the time of year known as the 'influenza season' or the 'flu season.' Seasonal influenza viruses cause annual influenza **epidemics** (see above) in the fall, winter, and spring, and circulate among people worldwide. Seasonal influenza A and B viruses are always evolving in ways we cannot predict.

Quadrivalent influenza vaccine
This kind of vaccine contains four inactivated influenza viruses.

Quarantine
This refers to keeping a person who is sick with influenza away from other people for a period of time, to stop the spread of disease.

Reye's Syndrome
This is a brain and liver disease that can follow infection with a virus, such as influenza.

Seasonal influenza
Seasonal influenza viruses are influenza A and B viruses that spread and cause illness in people during the time of year known as the 'influenza season' or the 'flu season'. Seasonal influenza viruses cause annual influenza **epidemics** (see above) in the fall, winter, and spring, and spread among people worldwide. Seasonal influenza A and B viruses are always evolving in ways we cannot predict.

'Stomach flu'
This refers to stomach troubles caused by a number of different viruses — but not influenza.

Strain
A strain is a group of organisms within a species or variety.

Subtype
There are four types of influenza viruses: A, B, C, and D. Influenza A and B are viruses that cause illness in humans. Influenza A viruses are divided into subtypes that are classified by **hemagglutinin** (H) (see above) and **neuraminidase** (N) (see above), which are proteins on the virus's surface.

Trivalent influenza vaccine
This kind of vaccine contains three inactivated influenza viruses.

Vaccine

This is a preparation that contains **antigens** (see above), which, when introduced into the body, stimulate it to produce specific antibodies. The antigens in a vaccine can be whole disease-causing organisms (killed or weakened) or parts of these organisms.

Virus

A virus is a sub-microscopic parasite found in plants, animals, and bacteria. It can cause disease. A virus consists of a core of RNA or DNA surrounded by a protein coat. A virus cannot reproduce without a host cell. Viruses are not considered living organisms.