

THIS AUTUMN, DON'T
FALL OUT OF HEALTH

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PREVENTIVE HEALTH

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HPV: NOT JUST A FEMALE ISSUE

7 REASONS TO USE VIRTUAL CARE THIS FALL

THE FLU VACCINE: MYTHS AND FACTS

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HPV: NOT JUST A FEMALE ISSUE

By Dr. Vivien Brown, Vice-president, Medical affairs, Medisys Executive Health

A whopping four out of five Canadians will get HPV (human papillomavirus) at some point in their lives, and while it's the most common sexually transmitted infection in the world, we still have a lot to learn about it. Many types of HPV have been identified, with some leading to cancer and others to skin lesions, and we know that **HPV infection causes more than 99% of cases of cervical cancer**. But more research is showing that the infection is also linked to cancer of the throat, oral cavity, penis, anus, vagina and vulva.

According to the Canadian Cancer Society, in Canada, about two-thirds of HPV-related cancers happen in areas other than the cervix. HPV infection is related to 80% to 90% of anal cancers; 40% to 50% of penile cancers; and now more than 70% of mouth and throat cancers. The research around the oncogenic or cancer causing viral types continues, but one thing we know for sure is that HPV prevention and vaccination isn't just a conversation that women and young girls must be having, but males too.

HPV is spread through intimate skin-to-skin contact. You can get HPV by having vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone who has the virus. Most commonly spread during vaginal or anal sex, HPV can be passed from person to person even when an infected person has no signs or symptoms of infection. Anyone who is sexually active can contract the virus, even if they have only had sex with one person. To reduce the risk of HPV related

cancers, the Canadian Cancer Society recommends the HPV vaccine in females aged 9 to 45 and in males aged 9 to 26. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization, the Canadian national guidelines committee, suggests that even men and women older than 26 and 45, respectively, should speak to their doctor and consider the vaccine. This is because risk depends on exposure, not age.

"Most providers still think of this as a woman's thing," says Dr. Nancy Durand, a gynecologist at Toronto's Sunnybrook Health Science Centre, "but the latest evidence makes it clear, we should discuss HPV with every single patient." New studies are indicating that HPV prevention and vaccination should be just as high a priority for men as it is for women. According to Canadian Cancer Statistics 2016, mouth and throat cancers from HPV (which now make up a third of all HPV-linked cancers) have increased 56% in men since the mid-1990s. Men are up to 4.5 times more likely to be diagnosed with these oropharyngeal cancers than women. What's more, cancers of the mouth and throat caused by HPV are rising dramatically among Canadian men and are poised to surpass the rate of cervical cancer in women, according to a report released by the Canadian Cancer Society. Even more sobering news for women: according to Canadian Cancer Statistics, the rate of anal cancers from HPV is increasing at an average of 3% per year, "the number of anal cancers in women is now surpassing men, including gay men," Durand said.

HOW TO PREVENT HPV

HPV vaccines help protect against HPV infection and associated cancers. There are three types of vaccines to protect against HPV infection in Canada - Cervarix, Gardasil 4 and Gardasil 9 - [click here](#) to learn more.

One thing is clear: HPV prevention and vaccination is a highly relevant issue for both men and women, but there is still a fair amount of confusion around the virus, its causes, and its consequences. Many Canadians may not be vaccinated against HPV because their doctors are not up to date with the latest research on risk, and the details about the virus. "Many providers still think of this issue as a problem for young promiscuous patients," says Durand. Some doctors assume vaccination is only necessary for children who are not yet sexually active or younger patients who are more likely to change sexual partners more often. While vaccination is most effective when given to individuals before they become sexually active, that doesn't mean that older patients should not be vaccinated too. Canadians are marrying later in life and more than a third of marriages end in divorce "If you're over the age of 30, your five-year risk of acquiring HPV is more than 20%," said Durand, "Over the age of 45, you still have more than a 10% risk."

An additional challenge faced in the fight against HPV-linked cancers is the fact that, unlike pap screening for

cervical cancer, there is no equivalent regular screening program in place for oropharyngeal cancers linked to HPV. Currently cervical pap screening is the only method for detecting HPV, which means that men with HPV "fly under the radar," and the virus goes undetected. This is why vaccination for both men and women is critical, and the earlier the better. The HPV vaccine is widely available through publicly-funded, school-based programs. It's now offered to boys and girls in all provinces and territories. Once you are out of the school system, the government no longer pays for the vaccine, but that doesn't mean it is not still really important. We have lots of guidelines in society that are recommended, but unfunded, such as car seats or bike helmets. Let's protect ourselves, our children, and our partners, and decrease the risk of cancer.

Whatever age or sex you are, it's important to talk to your doctor and your children about HPV prevention and vaccination. Understandably, this can be an uncomfortable topic to discuss, which is why we make it easy with Medisys On-Demand, our virtual care platform. You and your immediate family members can talk confidentially with healthcare professionals about HPV causes, symptoms, prevention and vaccination, all in the privacy and comfort of your own home. To begin that discussion now, or learn more about our virtual care services, [click here](#).

A hand holding a smartphone with a gold-colored frame. The screen displays the number '7' in a large, bold, orange font, followed by the text 'REASONS TO USE VIRTUAL CARE THIS FALL' in a smaller, bold, orange font. The background is a soft, out-of-focus yellow and white light.

7 REASONS TO USE VIRTUAL CARE THIS FALL

The autumn season is on its way, and with it comes more than cozy weather and pumpkin spice lattes. Fall is a peak season for many viral illnesses because, according to Harvard Medical School, the cold weather can suppress your immune system and increase your susceptibility to infections.

When you inevitably get hit with a bad cold or other illness this season, and you feel tired, congested, sore, or nauseated, the last thing you want to do is trek to a doctor's office or clinic and sit in a crowded waiting room to be seen. Fortunately, virtual healthcare services like Medisys On-Demand let you consult with a healthcare professional from the comfort of your home. Below we've looked at some health concerns and issues treated through virtual care:

1. COLDS, FLU AND RESPIRATORY ILLNESS

Colder weather compromising your immune system is just one of the reasons why fall is a peak season for catching a cold. The colder weather also keeps us indoors, in closer quarters with each other for longer periods of time, making us more susceptible to catching or passing on an airborne illness. The decrease in humidity that comes with the fall season is also a contributing factor; studies show that dry air makes it easier for the flu virus to circulate, and it also dries up some of the protective mucus in your lungs, creating the ideal conditions to catch a respiratory illness.

When it comes to respiratory illness - early detection is critical. Some viruses and bacterial infections mimic a common cold, but are actually much more dangerous and require treatment. The earlier you can identify and treat the illness, the shorter its duration in your body. With Medisys On-Demand, at the very first sign of an illness you can connect instantly through your smartphone with a healthcare professional who will help you determine the best, most effective treatment.

2. ALLERGIES & ASTHMA

If you suffer from a ragweed allergy, the months of August through October are typically a peak period for sneezing, congestion, puffy eyes and other unpleasant symptoms. Fall is often an unpleasant time of year for asthma sufferers as well. The risk of an asthma attack increases during the autumn season because of a number of factors including the onset of cooler air, allergies, leaves, and campfires, according to the American Lung Association. As in the case with respiratory infections, there are viruses that mimic symptoms of allergies, which are actually more dangerous. With Medisys On-Demand it's easy to consult with a healthcare professional about your symptoms to determine the cause and recommended course of action.

3. ARTHRITIS PAIN

According to the Canadian Arthritis Society, one in five Canadians suffer from arthritis. It is this country's most prevalent chronic health condition. Arthritis is a term that describes a group of over 100 diseases that are characterized by inflammation in the joints or other areas of the body. Inflammation is a medical term that describes pain, stiffness, redness and swelling. The fall season can exacerbate symptoms of arthritis for two reasons - the first being that cold, damp weather can cause increased pain in the joints, and the second reason is that colder weather often causes people to reduce their levels of physical activity, which also cause an increase in arthritis symptoms. For many arthritis sufferers, medication is only one part of the solution to managing this chronic condition. With Medisys On-Demand, individuals with chronic conditions such as arthritis can consult with a healthcare professional any time of the day or night to gain guidance on managing symptoms, or discuss issues such as the pros and cons of various prescription and non-prescription medication options.

4. SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER

Many people experience lower energy levels and mood changes as summer wanes and the colder weather arrives, but for some, these feelings aren't a simple case of the "winter blues". Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that relates to the change in season. For many who suffer from SAD, symptoms start in the fall and continue on throughout the winter. These symptoms include depression, low energy, losing interest in activities, trouble sleeping, changes in appetite, sluggishness, difficulty concentrating, feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness or guilt, and in some severe cases, frequent thoughts of death and suicide. If you think you may suffer from SAD, it's important to speak to a doctor without delay. For some, depression and emotional health concerns can be a difficult topic to discuss; Medisys On-Demand makes it easy to seek guidance from a healthcare professional from the comfort and privacy of your home.

5. RAYNAUD'S DISEASE

Raynaud's disease and secondary Raynaud's (also called Raynaud's phenomenon) causes numbness, pain, stinging, and changes in colour of the fingers and toes in response to cold temperatures or stress. For those with this condition, smaller arteries that supply blood to your skin narrow, limiting blood circulation to affected areas (vasospasm). After exposure to cold, if it takes more than 20 minutes for your fingers and toes to return to a normal feeling and temperature, you may have Raynaud's disease. Treatment depends on the severity of the

case and on the presence of other health conditions. Our virtual healthcare team can provide guidance on lifestyle changes that can help manage symptoms, or prescribe medications to improve blood flow. Raynaud's symptoms can, in some cases, be caused by more serious underlying conditions. Examples include connective tissue disease, disease of the arteries, and carpal tunnel syndrome. If you think you have Raynaud's, it's important to speak to a healthcare professional to determine whether the symptoms indicative of a more serious health issue.

6. SORE THROAT

A sore, itchy throat is most commonly caused by a viral infection such as a cold or flu, and thus is one of the more common signs that illness is on the horizon. Often a sore throat will resolve itself on its own, but in other cases treatment is required - a quick consult with our virtual care team will help you determine the best course of action. It's important to speak with a healthcare professional if your sore throat lasts longer than a week or is frequently recurring; if you have difficulty swallowing, breathing or opening your mouth; if you're feeling joint pain or an earache; develop a rash or fever higher than 101°F; discover blood in your saliva or phlegm; or develop a lump of any size around your neck or swelling in your face.

7. SINUSITIS

Sinus pain is a symptom of a common cold, which usually goes away by itself within about a week. But when sinus congestion lingers or worsens over time, it may be indicative of a bacterial infection, and in some cases, may require antibiotics. Sinusitis (also known as a sinus infection) refers to inflammation of the mucous membrane that lines the sinuses, which causes symptoms such as thick nasal mucus, a plugged nose, and facial pain. According to the University of Maryland Medical Center, sinusitis becomes more common as the cold weather arrives, and the pain associated with sinus headaches worsens in the cold and damp weather. If you are experiencing sinus pain, consult our virtual healthcare team to help determine the best course of action.

The fall season brings with it many reasons to take advantage of virtual healthcare services. Got questions? We've got answers. Medisys On-Demand healthcare practitioners are here to help. [Click here](#) to learn more.

Source:

<https://jvi.asm.org/content/88/14/7692>



THE FLU VACCINE: MYTHS AND FACTS



Every year in Canada, the flu leads to upwards of 12,000 hospitalizations and about 3,500 deaths. While most people recover from the flu within about a week, others experience serious and potentially life-threatening complications. This is especially true for vulnerable populations including babies, young children, the elderly, pregnant women, and those with underlying health conditions.

The flu virus mutates and changes rapidly. That is why a new vaccine is tested and produced each year to protect against new circulating strains. Only about one third of Canadians receive the flu shot annually, while nearly two thirds of us opt to forgo it. Why do so many Canadians choose to skip this safe and potentially life-saving vaccine? Many simply don't want to be inconvenienced by making a trip to their doctor's office, while others forgo the vaccine because of myths they believe to be true. Let's take a look at some of these myths in detail:

MYTH #1: THE FLU VACCINE IS NOT SAFE

Vaccinations are one of the most studied areas of modern medicine. Before the flu vaccine is approved for use each year it is extensively studied to ensure its safety and then is closely monitored after the public begins using it. The flu vaccine is proven to be safe in individuals over 6 months old, and is only contraindicated in very specific circumstances (eg. in individuals with life-threatening allergic reactions to an ingredient in the flu vaccine like eggs or gelatin, or those who have had Guillain-

Barré Syndrome). Serious adverse reactions to the flu vaccine are extremely rare. Specifically, there is an extremely low risk (about one per million doses) of developing Guillain-Barré Syndrome after receiving the flu vaccine. The most common side effects of the flu vaccine are mild tenderness (up to 64% of cases) and swelling around the injection site, and some individuals experience low-grade fever, discomfort, or muscle pains post-injection. These symptoms are more common in those receiving the flu vaccine for the first time.

MYTH #2: THE FLU IS NOT A SERIOUS CONDITION

It is true that most otherwise-healthy people will recover from the flu within 7 to 10 days. Others, however, may experience more serious symptoms or complications such as sinus and ear infections; pneumonia; inflammation of the heart (myocarditis), brain (encephalitis) or muscle (myositis, rhabdomyolysis) tissues; and even multi-organ failure (eg. respiratory and kidney failure). Flu-related infection of the respiratory tract can also trigger an extreme inflammatory response in the body and can lead to sepsis, which is life-threatening. Also, the flu can make a chronic medical problem worse. For example, people with asthma may experience severe asthma attacks while they have the flu, and people with chronic heart disease may experience a worsening of this condition triggered by flu.

MYTH #3: IF YOU RECEIVED THE FLU VACCINE ONE YEAR YOU DON'T NEED IT AGAIN

The influenza virus changes (mutates) each year, which is why a new vaccine is created annually. Getting the current vaccination each year is necessary to obtain protection against the strains most likely to cause an outbreak in the current year.

MYTH #4: IF YOU'VE ALREADY HAD THE FLU THIS FLU SEASON YOU DON'T NEED THE FLU SHOT

More than 100 different viruses can cause flu-like symptoms. Unless a doctor took a nasal swab and the swab was analyzed to determine the strain of virus causing your illness, you can't be sure that what you experienced (and thus have immunity to) was influenza. Also, even if you had the flu, presumably you were only infected by one strain and thus would still be susceptible to infection by additional flu strains. There are at least four strains circulating this 2019 flu season: H3N2, H1N1, and two different B strains. If you have been exposed to one flu strain, a flu shot will still offer protection against flu strains that you have not yet been exposed to.

MYTH #5: THE FLU VACCINE DOESN'T WORK

The flu vaccine is produced to offer protection against the most prevailing flu strains each year. A number of flu strains are circulating all the time, which is why people can still get the flu despite being vaccinated. **Being vaccinated substantially improves the chance of being protected from the flu in the current year**, but it isn't a guarantee. More importantly, receiving the annual flu vaccination is extremely important and effective in preventing the spread of the virus to members of the community who are the most vulnerable.

MYTH #6: I WILL GET THE FLU FROM THE FLU VACCINE

The injectable flu vaccine does not contain the live flu virus and therefore it can't cause the flu. Some individuals feel achy or slightly feverish after receiving the vaccine, but these mild symptoms are not the flu. It is important to understand that it takes about a week or two to receive full protection from the flu vaccine as your body builds up antibodies, and thus it is possible to contract the flu during the period immediately following vaccination if you are exposed. Some people believe that the flu shot caused their illness if they happen to get sick shortly after receiving the vaccine, but this is not the case.

MYTH #7: IT IS BETTER TO BUILD UP IMMUNITY NATURALLY; GETTING THE ANNUAL FLU VACCINE WEAKENS THE IMMUNE SYSTEM

A study published in the March 1, 2017, issue of The Journal of Infectious Diseases investigated whether getting an annual

vaccination against influenza (flu) can weaken your body's natural ability to protect itself from the disease. This study concluded that receiving an annual flu vaccination does not weaken the immune system. On the contrary, the individuals who received the flu shot annually had a better immune response to influenza versus those who were vaccinated only once.

MYTH #8: THE FLU VACCINE IS UNSAFE FOR PREGNANT AND BREASTFEEDING WOMEN

The injectable flu vaccine is not only proven safe for pregnant and breastfeeding women, but especially important in pregnant women because their immune systems are weaker than usual. Pregnant women should not get the intranasal (nasal spray) flu vaccine as it is a live vaccine. Pregnancy places extra demands on the body which can increase the risk of complications from the flu. Pregnant women have higher rates of complications and flu-related hospitalizations than non-pregnant women. The number of hospitalizations rises with increasing length of pregnancy after the first trimester. Women of advanced maternal age and women who are carrying multiple fetuses are at especially high risk for increased complications from the flu. If you are expected to deliver during the flu season, getting the flu vaccine means that antibodies are passed on to the baby during pregnancy (and in breast milk while breastfeeding) protecting both mother and infant.

The annual flu shot provides the best protection against seasonal influenza. Here are some tips to further protect yourself:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water;
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth as germs spread this way;
- Sneeze into your arm or sleeve;
- After wiping or blowing your nose with a tissue, wash your hands; and
- Stay home and avoid crowds if you feel sick.

This fall, the flu vaccine is your best shot.

Sources:

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RECIPE: LENTIL STEW WITH LEAFY GREENS

By Kimberly Paré, Registered Dietitian, Medisys Health Group

RECIPE SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 medium onions, chopped
- 200g mixed mushrooms
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 4 cups low-sodium chicken broth (or homemade chicken broth)
- 2 cups water
- 6 cups stemmed and torn mustard greens (about 1 bunch), Swiss chard, or kale
- 1 pound of sweet potatoes (about 2 medium), peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 cup dried lentils
- Ground pepper, to taste

DIRECTIONS:

1. Heat the oil in a large pot or Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add the onions and mushrooms and cook, tossing occasionally, until beginning to soften, 3 to 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute.

2. Add the broth, water, greens, sweet potatoes, lentils, and 2 teaspoons of pepper to the pot. Bring to a boil then reduce heat and simmer (partially covered) stirring occasionally until the lentils and sweet potatoes are tender, 30 to 35 minutes.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION:

(Per Serving)

Calories: 353

Fat: 5.8 g

Sat Fat: 1 g

Cholesterol: 0 mg

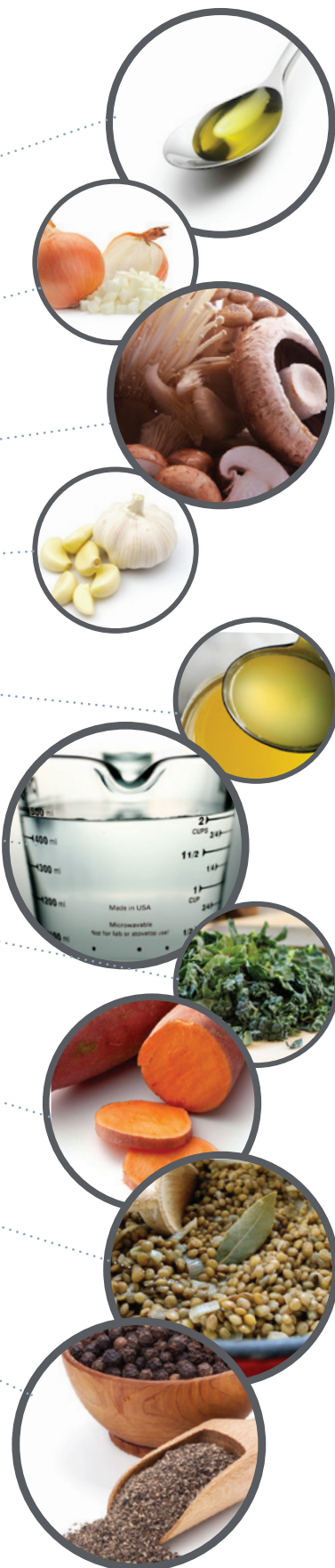
Sodium: 120 mg

Protein: 22 g

Carbohydrate: 57 g

Sugar: 9.6 g

Fiber: 11.4 g



OCTOBER 10TH IS WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY.



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30 DAYS FOR YOUR

**MENTAL
HEALTH**

Join the 30-day mental health
e-challenge and invite your
colleagues to do the same.



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mental health. Together we are stronger.