



## News Release

### Nunavummiut to have universal access to flu vaccine

**IQALUIT, Nunavut (October 3, 2005)** – The Nunavut health care system will now offer flu shots to anyone who wants one, Health and Social Services Minister Leona Aglukkaq announced today.

“It makes sense for Nunavut to offer ‘universal coverage’ so we can minimize the impact influenza has on families and the economy,” said Aglukkaq. “We want to make sure all Nunavummiut have the opportunity to be vaccinated. This will help reduce the spread of influenza in our communities.”

Until now, the focus of the health care system has been on vaccinating ‘at risk’ people against influenza: elders, infants, people with weak immune systems and people with chronic lung problems. As a result, about 40 per cent of the population is vaccinated annually.

By offering universal coverage, anyone can be protected from the more common variants of the influenza virus. It is up to an individual whether to get vaccinated or not, however. There will be no fee for this service for Nunavut residents.

“I hope that Nunavummiut take advantage of the influenza vaccination program when it is offered this fall,” Aglukkaq said. “Even in so-called mild cases, influenza can be a debilitating experience for both the patient and the people who care for him.”

Influenza is of concern to health professionals because it can leave patients vulnerable to other infections, such as pneumonia. The flu typically starts with a headache, chills and cough. Then comes fever, loss of appetite, muscle aches and fatigue, runny nose, sneezing, watery eyes and throat irritation. Children may also have nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Most people recover within a week or 10 days. Persons ‘at risk’ can suffer severe effects, or even complications leading to hospitalization, or death.

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