



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**PHARMACISTS JOIN THE MCGUINITY GOVERNMENT IN PROTECTING ONTARIANS  
THIS FLU SEASON**

**TORONTO, ON (November 17, 2005)** – The Ontario Pharmacists' Association (OPA) and the Canadian Association of Chain Drug Stores (CACDS) are partnering with the Ontario Government again this year to encourage Ontarians to protect themselves and others by taking advantage of the free flu shot clinics available across the province.

"Ontario's Universal Influenza Immunization Program is the only one of its kind in North America. It provides free flu shots to anyone over the age of six months who lives, works, or goes to school in Ontario," said Minister Smitherman. "Getting the shot protects you, your loved ones, and it helps prevent the spread of influenza to friends, colleagues, and the general public."

Participating pharmacies are holding flu shot clinics from November 14<sup>th</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup>; however, many pharmacies will continue to offer flu shots beyond the two week blitz. There is over 700 pharmacy flu shot clinics across Ontario. Visit the OPA, CACDS, or Ministry web-sites at: [www.opatoday.com](http://www.opatoday.com) or [www.cacds.com](http://www.cacds.com) or [www.health.gov.on.ca](http://www.health.gov.on.ca) to find where the closest pharmacy flu shot clinics are in your neighbourhood.

"Pharmacists are the most accessible health care providers," said Marc Kealey, CEO of the Ontario Pharmacists' Association. "Pharmacists are not only providing an important service to their community through the flu shot clinics, they are also available to educate and answer any questions or concerns that people might have related to flu and their health."

"Having flu shot clinics in pharmacies allows people to get their flu shot quickly and conveniently. That means people can get a shot without missing work or kids missing school," explained CACDS President and CEO, Christina Bisanz.

The free clinics are an example of pharmacists working co-operatively with public health units, the Ontario government, nurses and physicians to promote healthy communities and control the spread of a virus which is highly contagious and can lead to hospitalization, serious illness and lost productivity.

"Children aged six to 23 months are at high risk of hospitalization from flu complications," said Dr. Sheela Basrur, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health. "This year we are encouraging everyone to get the flu shot, especially children as they spread the flu easily at school and at home."

Get the true facts about flu, its symptoms and your options. Visit your local pharmacist.

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