

# Improving Vaccination Rates Against Influenza and Other Respiratory Illnesses Among Older Adults

Influenza is a prevalent, contagious and vaccine-preventable infectious disease in Canada

*And the consequences of influenza infections can be especially devastating for adults aged 65 years and older.*

**VACCINATION** is the most effective way for older adults to protect themselves against influenza or the “flu”



Canada is not hitting its **80% influenza vaccination coverage goal** for older adults with only **78%** reporting they got vaccinated against the flu in 2023.<sup>1</sup>

**19%** Older Adults represent **19%** of Canada's population<sup>2</sup>



But in 2022-2023, older adults accounted for:



**46%** of influenza or flu-related hospitalizations



**76%** of influenza or flu-related deaths<sup>3</sup>

**8th** Influenza ranks as the **8th** leading cause of death in Canada, together with pneumonia<sup>4</sup>.

Older adults should get the annually updated influenza vaccine or “flu shot” **each year.**

Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunizations recommends that older adults receive either of the available enhanced flu shots:



**Fluad**



**Fluzone High-Dose Quadrivalent**



These vaccines provide an increased benefit without any difference in safety. If these vaccines are not available, any of the other regular flu shots should be used.

# FACTORS THAT CAN IMPROVE INFLUENZA VACCINATION RATES AMONG OLDER ADULTS:



## Reducing Ongoing Misconceptions About Flu Vaccines

- More than **1 in 10** (13%) older adults said they disagree or don't know whether the flu shot is safe, when it is very safe.
- **27%** of older adults agreed that sometimes you can get the flu from the flu shot, when you cannot.

In addition, among older adults who didn't get their annual flu shot in 2023:

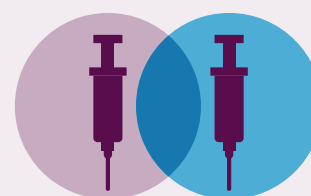
**24%** said it was for no specific reason, they just didn't get it,

**22%** said it was because they had concerns about the flu shot and/or its side effects, and

**20%** said it was because they are healthy and/or never get the flu.

## Promoting and Improving Opportunities for Vaccine Co-administration

Missed opportunities around offering multiple vaccines at the same time also appear to be contributing to lower overall vaccine uptake among older adults.



**69%**

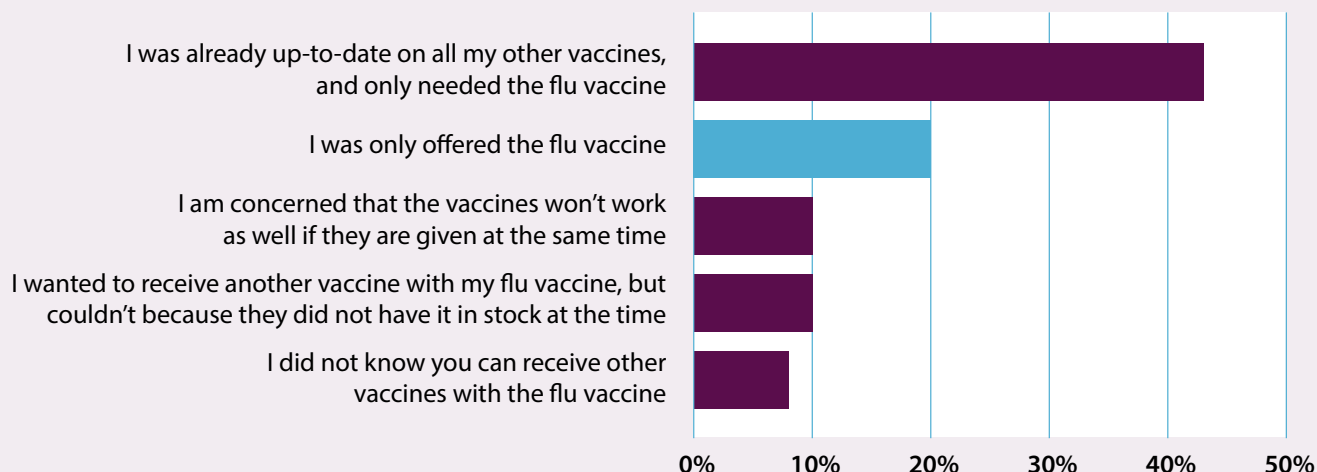
**69%** of older adults agreed that it is safe and effective to receive a flu shot at the same time as another vaccine, such as the COVID-19, pneumococcal, RSV or shingles vaccines.

**58%**

Yet only **58%** of older adults who got the annual flu shot in 2023 reported that they got another vaccine at the same time.

One of the top reasons for not receiving another vaccine at the same time was simply that only one vaccine was offered to them (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Top Reasons for Not Getting Another Vaccine at the Same Time Among Older Adults Who Got the Flu Vaccine Last Fall**



## Ensuring Health Care Providers are Providing Clear Recommendations on Influenza Vaccination

Older adults place significant value on the recommendations of their health care providers when it comes to staying on top of their immunizations:



**82%** of older adults said **the opinion of their health care provider is an important part of their decision** when it comes to getting the flu shot.



**80%** of older adults also reported that they **would not hesitate to get multiple vaccines** at once as long as their health care provider says it's safe.

Many older adults still don't know that there are enhanced flu shots specifically designed to provide them with better protection and health care providers could help to raise awareness around this:



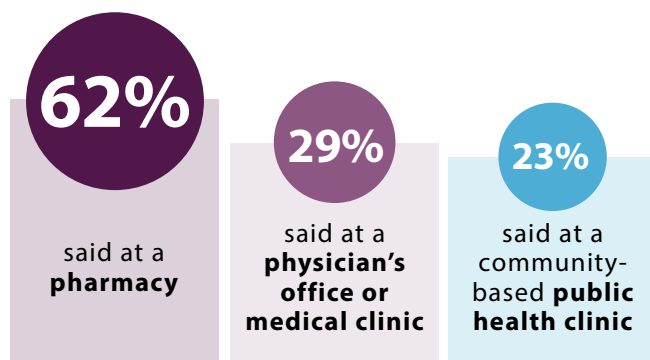
**29%** of older adults reported **not knowing that there are different flu shots** made for people 65 years of age and older.

## Promoting More Convenient Ways to Get Vaccinated Across a Range of Settings

When older adults who have been vaccinated against the flu were asked where they got their last flu shot:

- **59%** said at a pharmacy
- **14%** said at a physician's office or medical clinic
- **14%** said at a community-based public health clinic.

**But when asked to pick where they would prefer to get a flu shot:**



## THREE CALLS TO ACTION TO INCREASE INFLUENZA AND OTHER VACCINATION RATES AMONG OLDER ADULTS IN 2024:



1

Increase efforts to educate, reduce misconceptions and improve influenza vaccination knowledge among older adults including the availability of enhanced flu shots for them.



2

Encourage health care providers to discuss an older person's vaccination opportunities, and to provide clear guidance and recommendations including opportunities for the co-administration of a flu shot with other vaccines at the same time.



3

Improve the convenience around getting vaccinated including by making vaccinations more widely available through multiple settings including pharmacies, physician's offices and community-based public health clinics.

1 NIA 2023/2024 National Influenza Respiratory Viruses Survey

2 Statistics Canada. (2024, February 21). Population estimates on July 1st, by age and gender (17-10-0005-01) [Data table]. Government of Canada. <https://doi.org/10.25318/1710000501-eng>

3 Schmidt K, Ben Moussa M, Buckrell S, Rahal A, Chestley T, Bastien N, Lee L. National Influenza Annual Report, Canada, 2022–2023: Canada's first fall epidemic since the 2019–2020 season. *Can Commun Dis Rep* 2023;49(10):413–24. <https://doi.org/10.14745/ccdr.v49i10a02>

4 Statistics Canada. (2023, November 27). Leading causes of death, total population, by age group (13-10-0394-01) [Data table]. Government of Canada. <https://doi.org/10.25318/1310039401-eng>

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