

FALL 2025

A Guide to Vaccines for Older Canadians

SUPPORTING AGEING WITH CONFIDENCE,
INDEPENDENCE AND GOOD HEALTH

Read This Pamphlet to Learn About:

- Why Vaccines Are Important to Enable Healthy Ageing
- COVID-19 Vaccines
- Influenza Vaccines (Flu Shot)
- RSV Vaccines
- Pneumococcal (Pneumonia) Vaccines
- Shingles Vaccines
- Tetanus and Diphtheria Vaccines



Why Are Vaccines Important to Enable Healthy Ageing?

Vaccines are important throughout your life, and especially as you get older, to maintain your health and independence.



Your Immunity Naturally Weakens as You Age

As you grow older, your immune system naturally weakens, putting you at an increased risk of severe outcomes from infectious diseases.



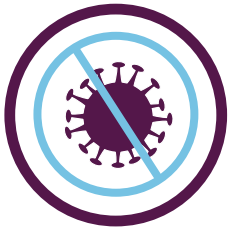
Vaccination Helps Prepare Your Body to Fight Vaccine-Preventable Infections

When a new virus or bacteria enters your body for the first time, it takes a while for your immune system to be able to fight it. Vaccines tell your immune system how to prepare for viruses or bacteria, allowing your body to respond more quickly before an infection causes more serious problems.



Vaccination Helps You Protect Others

When more people are vaccinated, it makes it difficult for viruses or bacteria to spread and infect others. This helps protect those who are not able to get vaccinated and those whose bodies can't develop a strong immune response to a vaccine.



Vaccines Have Eliminated Certain Deadly Diseases

Vaccines have worked so well that we have been able to eliminate certain conditions in Canada. For example, Canadians no longer need to be vaccinated against smallpox.



Your Acquired Protection Can Weaken Over Time

Over time, the protection vaccines provide may decrease for certain infectious diseases. Receiving booster doses can help strengthen your immunity against them.



Vaccines Are a Safe Option

Vaccines go through a lot of testing and are consistently monitored, which means they are very safe! Side effects are usually mild and only last a few days.

Which Vaccines Are Important for Older Canadians?

In order to allow you to maintain your independence and promote healthy ageing, it is recommended that you get vaccinated against the following infectious diseases:

- COVID-19
- Influenza (flu)
- RSV
- Pneumococcal disease (pneumonia)
- Shingles
- Tetanus and diphtheria

If you are planning on travelling, you may benefit from getting vaccinated against additional diseases (e.g., hepatitis A & B, yellow fever or rabies).

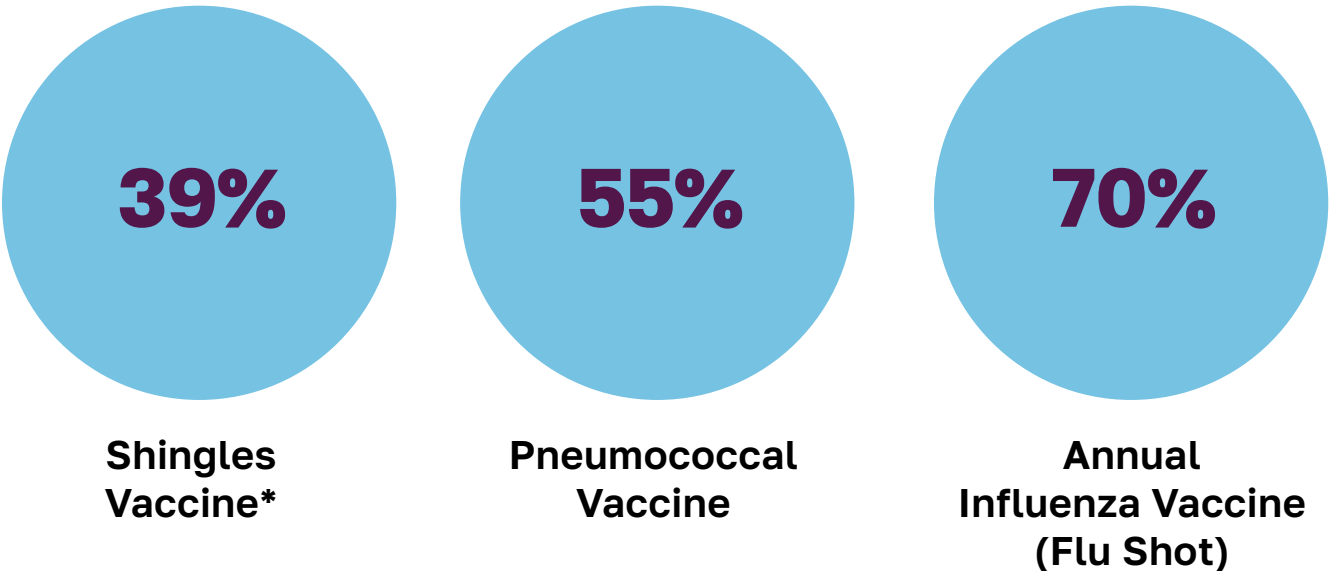
You should discuss your need for different vaccine options with your health care provider, as they will be able to determine which vaccines are needed and the best time to administer them.



TIP: It might be a good idea to use your birthday as a reminder to check in with your primary health care provider about what vaccines and other preventable health measures you might be eligible for!

How Many Older Canadians Have Received their Recommended Vaccines?

One of Canada’s national vaccination coverage goals by 2025 is to ensure that at least 80% of older Canadians have received both the pneumococcal vaccine and the annual flu shot. According to the 2023 Adult National Immunization Coverage Survey, vaccination rates **remain far too low** among older Canadians:



* This rate is for adults 50 years and older.

COVID-19 Vaccine

AGE	#DOSES	COST
All Ages	1+ Per Year	Free/ Some Cost

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Older adults may present with symptoms differently (e.g., mild fever) or have less common symptoms (e.g., nausea, congestion, diarrhea, vomiting, falls, dehydration and delirium).

COVID-19 infection can lead to severe symptoms, including difficulty breathing or severe shortness of breath. If you experience these symptoms, seek medical attention.

COVID-19 infection may also lead to post COVID-19 condition (also known as long COVID), where symptoms last for at least two months and are present three or more months after the onset of the infection and cannot be explained by an alternate diagnosis.

Why should I get this vaccine?

The risk of hospitalization for severe illness and death from COVID-19 is significantly higher among older adults. COVID-19 ranked as the 6th-leading cause of death in Canada, with 95% of these deaths occurring among an estimated 7,528 older Canadians in 2023.

The new COVID-19 vaccines are expected to provide a better response against current SARS-CoV-2 strains compared to earlier vaccines and improve protection against symptomatic and severe disease that might have reduced since a person's last COVID-19 vaccination or SARS-CoV-2 infection.

Which vaccines are recommended?

Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends older Canadians, regardless of their vaccination history, receive at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine per year. There is no preference between the new LP.8.1 COVID-19 vaccines:

- Spikevax (Moderna)
- Comirnaty (Pfizer-BioNTech)

Older adults with weakened immune systems who have not received or completed their primary series dose(s) are recommended to receive one to three doses.

Among older adults who have already been vaccinated, some groups should receive two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine per year: adults 80 years and older, residents of long-term care homes and other congregate living settings, and individuals with weakened immune systems. All other older adults may receive a second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine per year.

How much do these vaccines cost?

Currently, all provinces and territories (apart from Alberta) provide the COVID-19 vaccine for free for older adults. In Alberta, coverage is limited to certain groups (e.g., recipients of the Alberta Seniors Benefit, home care clients and residents of continuing care homes).

If you have a private drug plan, it may also cover the cost of this vaccine if it is not being publicly funded for you.

Where do I get this vaccine?

Depending on your province or territory, vaccines are available through public health clinics, primary care and some specialty care clinics, pharmacies and hospitals. **COVID-19 vaccines may be given at the same time as, or at any time before or after, other vaccines.** Please talk to your health care provider to learn more.

Influenza (Flu) Vaccine

AGE	#DOSES	COST
All Ages	1 Per Year	Free

What Is Influenza?

Influenza infections can occur throughout the year, but are more common during “flu season,” which typically occurs from November to May.

Symptoms can include fever, headache, muscle aches, fatigue, sore throat, chills, coughing and loss of appetite. Most people recover within seven to 10 days, but some may experience more serious outcomes such as worsening of medical conditions, hospitalization or death.

Why should I get this vaccine?

Older Canadians are more likely to experience serious outcomes (e.g., pneumonia, heart attack and death). Other high-risk populations include those living with certain chronic health conditions, pregnant people, people living in long-term care homes or other chronic care settings and Indigenous peoples.

Together with pneumonia, influenza ranked as the 8th-leading cause of death in Canada, with 88% of these deaths occurring among an estimated 5,623 older Canadians in 2023.

Which vaccines are recommended?

There are numerous influenza vaccines available to older Canadians. These vaccines are either standard-dose influenza vaccines or enhanced influenza vaccines (e.g., Fluzone High-Dose or Fluvad).

NACI recommends Canadians get the influenza vaccine each year, as the specific strains in the vaccines often change each year to better match the current influenza viruses and our body's immune response may not persist beyond a year.

NACI recommends that older adults should be offered one of the available enhanced influenza vaccines: Fluzone High-Dose or Flud. These vaccines provide an increased benefit without any difference in safety. If these vaccines are not available, any of the other influenza vaccines should be used.

How much do these vaccines cost?

All provinces and territories provide at least one of the enhanced influenza vaccines for older adults free of charge.

If you have a private drug plan, it may also cover the cost of the Fluzone High-Dose or Flud enhanced vaccines.

Where and when do I get this vaccine?

Depending on your province or territory, flu shots are available at primary care and some specialty care clinics, pharmacies or public health clinics. Even though you can get the influenza vaccine any time during the fall/winter seasons, **every older Canadian should try to receive their annual dose as early in the fall season as possible. Influenza vaccines may be given at the same time as, or any time before or after, other vaccines are given.** Please talk to your health care provider to learn more.

RSV Vaccine

AGE	#DOSES	COST
50+	1	Free/ Some Cost

What is Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)?

RSV is a virus that infects people's airways and lungs, causing infection in the upper and lower parts of their respiratory systems. The transmission of RSV infections in Canada follows a seasonal pattern, generally beginning in the fall and ending in early spring.

RSV infections generally cause a mild illness with cold-like symptoms (e.g., runny nose, coughing, sneezing, wheezing, fever, decrease in appetite). Individuals usually recover in one to two weeks, but complications can include lower respiratory tract disease (e.g., pneumonia), worsening of health conditions, hospitalizations and deaths.

As individuals only develop temporary immunity against RSV, one may experience repeat RSV infections at any age.

Why should I get this vaccine?

Groups among adults at risk for severe outcomes from RSV infections include older adults, individuals with chronic lung disease, heart disease, compromised immune systems and those living in long-term care settings. Among adults, hospitalization rates increase with age, with annual rates being eight times higher for individuals 80 years and older compared to the overall rate.

Older adults have the highest mortality rate attributable to RSV infections, more than six times higher than the overall mortality rate. Similar to influenza and COVID-19, 85% of deaths among hospitalized patients with RSV were among older adults.

Which vaccines are recommended?

There are three RSV vaccines for adults 60 years and older: Abrysvo, Arexvy, and mRESVIA.

NACI recommends one dose of the RSV vaccine for:

- Adults 75 years and older, especially those with certain chronic health conditions
- Adults 60 years and older who are residents of long-term care homes and other chronic care settings

The RSV vaccine may also be considered for adults 50 to 74 years of age in consultation with their health care provider.

There is no preference between the RSV vaccines for adults 60 years and older. For adults 50 to 59 years, only Arexvy can be used.

How much do these vaccines cost?

Currently, Abrysvo and/or Arexvy may be offered for free through provincial and territorial programs. New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island and Yukon provide RSV vaccines at no cost for all older adults 75 years and older and certain high-risk adults 60 years and older. Alberta covers the vaccines for all older adults 70 years and older and certain high-risk adults 60 years and older. In Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Quebec, RSV vaccines are only free for certain high-risk adults 60 years and older.

If you have a private drug plan, it may cover the cost of RSV vaccines.

Where do I get this vaccine?

Depending on your province or territory, vaccines are available through primary care and some specialty care clinics, pharmacies or public health clinics. **Older Canadians should try to receive the vaccine just before the start of the fall season. RSV vaccines may be given at the same time, or any time before or after other vaccines are given.** If possible, at least a six-week gap should be given between RSV vaccines and non-seasonal vaccines (e.g., shingles, diphtheria-tetanus vaccines). Please talk to your health care provider to learn more.

Pneumococcal Vaccine

AGE	#DOSES	COST
65+	1	Free/ Some Cost

What are pneumococcal diseases?

Pneumococcal diseases are a group of diseases caused by the bacteria called *Streptococcus pneumoniae* (*S. pneumoniae*). They may cause infections of the lungs, ear, sinuses and more rarely the bloodstream or central nervous system.

Pneumonia, a lung infection, is the most common serious form of pneumococcal disease. Symptoms may include difficulty breathing, coughing, fever, sweating, chills, fatigue, nausea and vomiting, chest pain, faster than normal heartbeat, confusion or delirium, lower than normal body temperature and diarrhea. Thousands of mostly older Canadians experience more serious outcomes.

Why should I get the vaccine?

Older Canadians are at a higher risk of severe outcomes, making up the majority of pneumonia-related hospitalizations and deaths each year in Canada. Other groups that are at higher risk include those living with certain medical conditions (e.g., heart disease, lung disease, weakened immune systems), and with certain behavioural/social factors (e.g., smoking, homelessness).

Together with influenza, pneumonia ranked as the 8th-leading cause of death in Canada in 2023.

Which vaccine is recommended?

There are two types of pneumococcal vaccines administered for adults in Canada:

- Pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (PPV23)
- Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV13, PCV15, PCV20, PCV21)

The number within each vaccine's name indicates how many types of *S. pneumoniae* bacteria it protects against.

NACI recommends all adults aged 65 years and older get one dose of either Prevnar 20 (PCV20) or Capvaxive (PCV21) vaccine, regardless of whether they have received another pneumococcal vaccine. As an alternative, older adults may get Vaxneuvance (PCV15), followed by Pneumovax 23 (PPV23) at least eight weeks later.

For older adults who have previously received Prevnar 13 (PCV13), Vaxneuvance or Pneumovax 23, NACI recommends Prevnar 20 or Capvaxive should be given after at least one year. A minimum interval of 8 weeks may be considered for those who have, or will have, weakened immune systems.

How much do these vaccines cost?

All provinces and territories provide pneumococcal vaccine coverage for older adults, ranging from full to partial coverage based on past pneumococcal vaccination history and/or other risk factors. All provinces and territories, apart from Quebec, provide coverage of Prevnar 20 for older adults. Quebec provides coverage of Prevnar 20 and Pneumovax 23 to specific older adult groups.

Additionally, if you have a private drug plan, it may cover the cost of pneumococcal vaccines.

Where do I get this vaccine?

Depending on your province or territory, vaccines are available at primary care and some specialty care clinics, pharmacies or public health clinics. **Pneumococcal vaccines may be given at the same time as some of the other vaccines discussed in this pamphlet.** Please talk to your health care provider to learn more.

Shingles Vaccine

AGE	#DOSES	COST
50+	2	Free/ Some Cost

What is Shingles?

Shingles (herpes zoster) is an infection caused when the chickenpox virus is reactivated. Shingles infection presents differently than chickenpox, typically as a painful, localized blistering rash, accompanied by headache and fever.

Beyond these symptoms, people can also experience serious outcomes, including prolonged, severe pain known as post-herpetic neuralgia, which lasts for more than 90 days and sometimes for years. Other complications can include nerve paralysis, vision loss and problems with hearing or balance.

Why should I get the vaccine?

Anyone who has had chickenpox is at risk of developing shingles, which usually arises many years after they had chickenpox. Most cases of shingles occur in those older than 50 years of age and often present more severely in this age group. Other high-risk groups include those who have weakened immune systems or are living with chronic conditions.

Which vaccine is recommended?

There is currently one shingles vaccine, Shingrix, available in Canada. The Shingrix vaccine requires two doses, which are recommended to be given across a two- to six-month period.

In clinical trials, **the Shingrix vaccine has been shown to provide strong protection against shingles and its complications** (e.g., post-herpetic neuralgia) for at least 11 years from vaccination in adults aged 50 years and older.

NACI recommends that Canadians aged 50 years and older get the Shingrix vaccine, including those who have been previously vaccinated with the older Zostavax II vaccine and those who have had a previous episode of shingles.

How much does this vaccine cost?

Currently, Shingrix may be offered for free across certain regions and programs.

Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island provide Shingrix free for all older adults. Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, Saskatchewan and Yukon provide varying coverage of Shingrix, based on age, risk factors or past vaccination history.

The First Nations Health Authority in British Columbia and federal government programs for First Nations and Inuit peoples, veterans and those in federal custody, currently provide the Shingrix vaccine free of charge for certain older and other high-risk populations.

If you have a private drug plan, it may cover the cost of this vaccine.

Where do I get this vaccine?

Depending on your province or territory, the Shingrix vaccine is available at primary care and some specialty care clinics, pharmacies or public health clinics. **The Shingrix vaccine may be given at the same time as some of the other vaccines discussed in this pamphlet.** Please talk to your health care provider to learn more.

Tetanus and Diphtheria Vaccine

AGE	#DOSES	COST
18+	1 Every 10 Years	Free/ Some Cost

What are Tetanus and Diphtheria?

Both tetanus (lockjaw) and diphtheria are rare but severe diseases that can be fatal.

Tetanus causes painful muscle spasms and difficulty swallowing, which can later lead to serious outcomes (e.g., fractures, death).

Diphtheria can cause numerous symptoms including mild fever, trouble swallowing, skin infections, sore throat, uneasiness and loss of appetite. At times these can lead to serious outcomes impacting the entire body, including central nervous system effects and heart failure.

Why should I get this vaccine?

Infants and older adults are more likely to have severe outcomes from these diseases, with those aged 60 years and older having the highest risk of death from tetanus.

It has also been found that the level of protection against these diseases decreases over time after vaccination, highlighting the need to receive additional doses as we age.

Which vaccines are recommended?

In Canada, vaccines for tetanus and diphtheria are not given separately, but together in one dose.

NACI recommends that fully immunized adults receive a booster dose of the tetanus and diphtheria (Td) vaccine every 10 years.

For those who have not been immunized in adulthood, one dose of the Tdap vaccine (which also protects against pertussis [whooping cough]) is recommended first. For adults who have never received these vaccines at all, one dose of the Tdap-IPV vaccine (Tdap plus polio prevention), along with two doses of any Td-containing vaccine (e.g., Td, Tdap, Tdap-IPV) is recommended first. Your health care provider can help you determine the right sequence of vaccinations for you.

How much do these vaccines cost?

Provinces and territories publicly fund either the Td and/or Tdap vaccines every 10 years. Quebec is the only exception and funds one dose of the Td vaccine at 50 years. Provinces and territories may provide further coverage of the Td-containing vaccines.

Where do I get this vaccine?

Depending on your province or territory, vaccines are available at primary care and some specialty care clinics, pharmacies or public health clinics. **These vaccines may be given at the same time as most of the other vaccines discussed in this pamphlet.** Please talk to your health care provider to learn more.

How Can I Check Which Vaccines I Have Already Received?

- 1) Contact your primary health care provider as they should have a record of your vaccinations.
- 2) Contact your local public health office where you received vaccinations as a child, as most maintain a registry.
- 3) If you are not able to confirm your vaccination history, talk to your health care provider, as there are other ways to try to determine this.

Record of Immunizations

You can keep track of your vaccines through one of the following ways:

- 1) Download and print the next page. Ask your health care provider to log each vaccine you receive in this chart. Keep this record in a safe place with your other important health documents.
- 2) Ask your health care provider or public health office for a card or booklet to keep track of your immunizations.
- 3) Use the **FREE CANImmunize Website and App** to track your vaccines through your computer, phone or tablet.
 - Securely store and access your immunization record
 - Receive reminders when to vaccinate
 - Get facts about vaccination specific to your region

To use this platform, click on any of the following icons:



Where Can I Find More Information?

The Public Health Agency of Canada has created various public resources:



Vaccination for Adults

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/vaccination-adults.html>



Vaccines for COVID-19

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19/vaccines.html>



Flu (Influenza)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/flu-influenza.html>



Vaccine Safety and Possible Side Effects

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/vaccination-children/safety-concerns-side-effects.html>



Vaccine Preventable Diseases (Causes, Symptoms, Risks, Treatment, etc.)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases.html?vaccine-preventable>



Provincial and Territorial Routine Vaccination Programs for Healthy, Previously Immunized Adults

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/provincial-territorial-immunization-information/routine-vaccination-healthy-previously-immunized-adult.html>

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