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NEWS RELEASE

Canada Continues to Fall Short on its own Flu Vaccination Targets for Older Adults, New NIA Report Finds

National Institute on Ageing calls for stronger influenza prevention efforts

TORONTO, ON, November 24, 2026 — Despite more than two decades of national efforts to improve its influenza vaccination rates, Canada continues to fall short of its target of vaccinating 80% of adults aged 65 and older, according to a new report released today by the National Institute on Ageing (NIA) at Toronto Metropolitan University.

The report, *The Underappreciated Burden of Influenza Amongst Canada's Older Population, And What We Need to Do About It*, finds that only 64% of Canadians aged 65 and older reported receiving an influenza vaccine during the 2025–26 season, well below the national target established in 2001.

The findings underscore the need for stronger public education, improved access to vaccination and more coordinated efforts across Canada's health care systems to protect older adults from a preventable illness that continues to cause serious health complications, hospitalizations and deaths.

"Influenza is too often dismissed as a routine seasonal illness, but for older Canadians, the consequences can be devastating," said Dr. Samir Sinha, Director of Health Policy Research at the NIA. "We have safe and effective vaccines, including enhanced vaccines specifically recommended for older adults. Yet far too many Canadians remain unprotected. We need to do more to ensure that every older Canadian understands their risks and can easily access the protection they need."

In Canada, influenza causes an estimated average of 15,000 respiratory hospitalizations and $2.6 billion in economic costs annually. In 2024, influenza and pneumonia together accounted for 7,658 deaths, with nearly nine in ten occurring among adults aged 65 and older. Yet vaccination rates among older Canadians remain below the national target of 80%, ranging from 50% in Alberta to 77% in Nova Scotia during the 2025–26 season.

Eight Recommendations to Strengthen Influenza Prevention in Canada

The report outlines eight evidence-informed recommendations to improve influenza prevention and vaccination uptake across Canada. These include strengthening public health prevention efforts, improving national influenza surveillance and vaccination reporting, supporting the development of better vaccines, and expanding clinical education for primary care providers and pharmacists.

It also calls for efforts to increase influenza vaccination among health care providers, greater opportunities to administer influenza vaccines alongside other recommended vaccines, and improved access to vaccination across provinces and territories.

The report emphasizes that improving vaccination rates will require coordinated action from governments, public health authorities, health care providers and community partners.

Alongside the report, the NIA is launching several new public education resources, including a **Guide to Vaccines for Older Canadians** and a new online **Vaccine Information Tool** that helps older adults, families and caregivers find information about recommended vaccines, public coverage and availability in their province or territory.

While all provinces and territories publicly fund at least one enhanced influenza vaccine for adults aged 65 and older, the types of vaccines available and where they can be accessed differ across jurisdictions.

“Canadians need clear, accessible information about what is available to them and how to get vaccinated,” said Alyssa Brierley, Executive Director of the NIA. “These new resources are an important step toward making vaccination information easier to understand and helping older adults take action to protect their health.”

About The National Institute on Ageing

Founded in 2016, the National Institute on Ageing (NIA) is celebrating a decade of impact in our mission to improve the lives of older adults and the systems that support them. Over the past 10 years, the NIA has become Canada’s leading voice on ageing policy — convening stakeholders, conducting research, advancing policy solutions and practice innovations, sharing information and shifting attitudes. Our vision remains clear: a Canada where older adults feel valued, included, supported and better prepared to age with confidence.

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