

The flu and You—Facts for Older Adults



All age groups can be affected by the flu.

But older adults are at a greater risk.

Why? As we age, the function of the immune system declines. Our bodies have fewer immune cells, and they don't work as well. If we get sick, the illness may be more severe¹.

Did you know being physically active in a regular way can increase the number of immune cells and improve how they function. That's true, no matter how old we are².

Older adults with an underlying health condition are at greater risk for complications or even death due to the flu.

Why? Inflammation and fever associated with the flu can make your body work harder, and put extra strain on your heart. That's why people with heart disease are more likely to suffer from severe influenza that can lead to complications such as pneumonia and serious cardiac events³.

Did you know staying active helps to manage many chronic conditions. The healthier we are, the better we are at fighting viral infections⁴.

The high-dose flu shot is more effective for older adults.

Why? Flu vaccines help your body build its own defences so you can do a better job of preventing or fighting infection caused by the flu.

The higher-dose flu vaccine has four times as many antigens (the substance that induces the immune response in the body) compared to the regular flu vaccine. This high dose formulation provides 24% greater protection than the standard flu shot and is recommended for older adults⁵.

Did you know physical activity can make the flu shot more effective? Physically active older adults produce more antibodies (immune cells) after they get the flu vaccine⁶. That's another good reason to make being active part of your daily routine.

More information on flu vaccines for seniors

Canadian Immunization Guide Chapter on Influenza and Statement on Seasonal Influenza Vaccine for 2022–2023

<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/vaccines-immunization/canadian-immunization-guide-statement-seasonal-influenza-vaccine-2022-2023/naci-2022-2023-statement.pdf>

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