

# What seniors need to know to stay protected this flu season

As a follow up to our last article about the flu vaccine, we wanted to address some concerns that older adults across Canada shared with us. Some of you felt there was no scientific proof of the vaccine's effectiveness or wanted to know if there was research behind our statements. This article addresses those concerns. And this time, for those who are interested, we have included the research references.

**During flu season, you do everything you can to avoid getting sick. You wash your hands, eat healthy foods, now you wear a mask, and many of you always get your flu shot.**

This should be enough to keep you protected, right? The answer may not be so simple for those aged 65 and over. Seniors have a higher susceptibility to the flu as a result of weakening immune systems<sup>1</sup>. They are also at a higher risk for complications and hospitalizations once they do contract it<sup>2</sup>. The phenomenon, known as **immunosenesence**<sup>3</sup>, helps explain why the impact of flu on seniors is so profound. Those aged 65 and older have accounted for up to 70% of flu-related hospitalizations over the last five flu seasons <sup>4 5 6 7 8 9</sup>.

**Plus, the complications that can result from a senior getting the flu are severe.** Influenza can worsen chronic conditions like diabetes and cancer. It can also lead to heart attacks, strokes, and death<sup>10</sup>. All this has a devastating impact on families, communities, and the economy. It is an enormous strain on the Canadian healthcare system.

What's more, the standard flu vaccine is 50% less effective in adults over the age of 65 than it is for the rest of the population<sup>11</sup>. That means for seniors, getting a standard flu shot each year may not be enough protection from influenza.

**The good news is that our National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) has recommended a higher dose flu vaccine for older adults.**

The higher-dose flu vaccine has four times as many antigens (the substance that induces the immune response in the body) than the regular flu vaccine<sup>12</sup>. It is significantly more effective when it comes to protecting seniors.

**Talk to your healthcare provider about the higher dose vaccine.** To find out if it is covered in your province, contact your Public Health department.

And remember, no vaccine provides 100% protection. Nor can a vaccine help to treat influenza or its complications if you get sick.

## More information on flu vaccines for seniors

[Canadian Immunization Guide on Seasonal Influenza Vaccine Immunize Canada](#)

## click on text for hyperlink

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12 FLUZONE® High-Dose vaccine. Product Monograph. Sanofi Pasteur Inc., May 2018. April 24, 2019.

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Supported by an educational grant from Sanofi Pasteur.