

Flu Consumer Article

Title : Why older adults are more at risk of catching the flu

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### **Why older adults are more at risk of catching the flu**

(NC) Influenza is one of the leading causes of death in Canada, resulting in an average of 3,500 deaths each year. While people of all ages can contract the flu, adults 65 and older are more at risk, with up to 91 per cent of flu-related deaths occurring in seniors.

Our immune systems weaken naturally as we age, meaning older adults have lower responses to infections and greater susceptibility to the flu. They are also at high risk for complications or hospitalization if they do get the flu. The flu can also trigger a heart attack or stroke, or worsen conditions like diabetes.

Vaccination is critical for protection from the flu. It can help prevent infection and reduce the severity of symptoms. However, the standard flu vaccine is not as effective for those over 65 years of age as it is in younger, healthy adults.

In its recommendations for the 2019 to 2020 flu season, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, the national committee of experts that provides public health advice related to immunization, concluded that the higher dose flu vaccine provides superior protection compared to the standard flu shot and should be offered to adults 65 years of age and older.

“My dad spent 93 days in the hospital and 48 days in the ICU after contracting influenza. We thought we were going to lose him,” recalls pharmacist Umberto Leone. “I’m so grateful he made it out alive. This experience opened my eyes to the dangers of influenza and the importance of staying protected and getting vaccinated with the right flu shot for you.”

#### **Get ready for the flu season and stay protected**

Experts recommend that older adults get vaccinated with the higher-dose flu shot, drink plenty of fluids, maintain a healthy diet, engage in physical activity, regularly wash their hands and avoid close contact with people who have the flu.

For more information on the flu in seniors, talk to your healthcare provider. The higher dose vaccine is now covered for all adults 65+ in Ontario. To find out if the vaccine is covered in your province, contact your public health officials and visit [fluzone.ca](http://fluzone.ca).