

# DON'T LET INFLUENZA CHANGE YOUR RETIREMENT PLANS

It's not **JUST** a cold. It's not **JUST** a stomach illness. It's not **JUST** the flu. **Influenza is SERIOUS, and can be deadly.**

The more informed you are, the more you'll understand the importance of getting an annual influenza (flu) vaccination. Being immunized will help you protect yourself and prevent the spread of flu to those you care about, including those most vulnerable, like your grandchildren and those with cancer.

**According to the World Health Organization, influenza vaccination is the 3<sup>rd</sup> priority intervention to achieve healthy ageing after the prevention of falls and the promotion of physical activity.**

## ADULTS 65 YEARS AND OLDER

Compared with younger adults, adults 65 years and older have a higher prevalence of chronic medical conditions, many of which are associated with increased risk of **flu-related complications and severe outcomes**.

Immunosenescence is the **natural decline of our body's immune system** as we age, which increases our risk of contracting infections like the flu and may reduce our response to vaccines.

## PEOPLE WITH CERTAIN MEDICAL CONDITIONS

People with medical conditions including asthma, chronic lung disease, diabetes, and heart disease are considered to be at higher risk for developing flu-related complications.

The flu has the ability to worsen chronic conditions; it is a **known trigger for heart attacks and strokes** in people with existing heart disease.

## HOSPITALIZATION, LOSS OF INDEPENDENCE, AND FRAILTY

Influenza can take away independent living from older adults. A single hospitalization (due to flu or in general) can have a devastating impact on an older adult's ability to live independently.

Studies have found that as many as **1/3 of older adults** leave hospitals with a significant loss of ability to carry out their activities of daily living, such as bathing, dressing or eating.

Influenza is the **3<sup>rd</sup> leading cause of catastrophic disability\***, only behind congestive heart failure and stroke.

\* Catastrophic disability is defined as the loss of independence in three or more basic activities of daily living (e.g. eating, dressing, and bathing).

**GET VACCINATED TO HELP PROTECT YOURSELF  
AND PREVENT THE SPREAD OF FLU TO OTHERS**

# UNDERSTANDING THE UNDERAPPRECIATED BURDEN OF INFLUENZA AMONGST CANADA'S OLDER ADULTS

Influenza, together with all causes of pneumonia, is the 7<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in Canada, and is the leading cause of death amongst diseases prevented by vaccines.

## FLU-RELATED HOSPITALIZATIONS AND DEATHS

### WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

- Every year in Canada, influenza causes an average of 12,200 hospitalizations and an average of 3,500 deaths.
- On average, adults 65 years and older account for **70% of flu-related hospitalizations** and **90% of flu-related deaths**.

## HEART, LUNG AND THE FLU

In adults 65 years and older, the risk of death associated with the flu was:

- **5X GREATER** among those with chronic heart disease
- **12X GREATER** among those with chronic lung disease
- **20X GREATER** among those with BOTH chronic heart and lung conditions.

**It is imperative to prevent the flu in adults 65 years and older.**

## WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN FLU AND HEART ATTACKS?

### DID YOU KNOW?

A recent Canadian study of adults found that:

- The risk of heart attack was **6X HIGHER** within 7 days of a flu diagnosis.

In a separate study in adults with varying degrees of cardiovascular risk:

- Flu vaccination was associated with a **36% lower risk of major cardiovascular events** including cardiovascular death, heart attack and heart failure.

## VACCINES: LESS THAN 100% IS BETTER THAN 0%

Even when there is a less than ideal match or lower effectiveness against one virus, it is important to be aware that those who get the flu vaccine:

- **ARE STILL MORE LIKELY TO BE PROTECTED AGAINST THE FLU COMPARED TO THOSE WHO ARE UNVACCINATED**
- **ARE PROTECTED AGAINST THE OTHER FLU STRAINS THAT ARE CONTAINED IN THE VACCINE**
- **MAY HAVE A Milder illness even if they do get the flu.**

**You are also less likely to pass the flu along to those who aren't able to fight it.**

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends flu vaccination for everyone 6 months of age and older, especially those at high risk, including infants, adults 65 years and older, and those with comorbidities.