

August 1, 2024

## **Ageing organizations support NACI's recommendations on respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) for older and at-risk adults in Canada**

The International Federation on Ageing (IFA), The Canadian Association of Retired Persons (CARP), The National Institute on Ageing (NIA) and Canada's National Seniors' Advocacy Organization (CanAge) are pleased to see the recent recommendations from the [National Advisory Committee on Immunization \(NACI\)](#) regarding RSV prevention in Canada, which support protecting older and at-risk populations in Canada.

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a common respiratory virus and growing global public health concern that affects millions annually. RSV has significant impacts beyond childhood, particularly amongst older adults and those with chronic conditions, such as lung diseases, heart diseases and diabetes. Each year, RSV leads to 3.4 million hospitalizations and over 100,000 deaths worldwide, highlighting its severity across all age groups.

Older adults and individuals with preexisting health conditions face heightened risks from RSV, yet they are often overlooked in awareness and prevention initiatives aimed at combatting the disease. In the context of ageing populations and heavily circulating respiratory diseases leading to hospital admissions, strain on intensive and long-term care units and overall health system burden, it is necessary to support prevention efforts, and maintenance of health and well-being, with vaccination as a key strategy.

On July 12, 2024, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) released the NACI issued recommendations for public health decisions, which provide the following guidance: RSV immunization programs for adults 75 years of age and over, particularly for those at an increased risk of severe RSV disease, as well as for those 60 years of age and over residing in nursing homes and other chronic care facilities. NACI also makes a discretionary recommendation for health care providers, where an RSV vaccine may be considered for adults 60 to 74 years of age in consultation with their health care provider.

"Vaccination strategies and programs are essential to support healthy ageing, from childhood, across adulthood and into older age," says Katrina Bouzanis, Acting Director of Policy, Advocacy and Innovation at the IFA. "These RSV recommendations provide a crucial framework for safeguarding the most at-risk populations across the life course."

IFA, CARP, NIA and CanAge call for implementation of these recommendations across provinces and territories in Canada to protect those most at-risk and ensure robust vaccination uptake.

"By prioritizing immunization for older adults, we can significantly reduce the burden of RSV and support healthier aging," says Alyssa Brierley, Executive Director of the NIA. "The National Institute on Ageing supports these recommendations and encourages all provinces and territories to implement them promptly, ensuring that our healthcare systems are equipped to protect the health of all Canadians."



In light of the recent updates to pneumococcal pneumonia vaccination in many provinces and territories, reflecting implementation of NACI recommendations which support the most up-to-date protection against disease, the IFA, CARP, NIA and CanAge hope to see similar provincial and territorial implementation of recommendations on RSV vaccination.

Provinces and territories are urged to integrate NACI's RSV recommendations into their immunization strategies, ensuring comprehensive protection for older adults and at-risk individuals. There is opportunity for further enhancement of these recommendations and subsequent programs, recognizing the risk of RSV for older adults living in the community. In the interim, robust conversations between older adults and their healthcare providers, in addition to tailored public health messaging can support awareness and uptake of RSV vaccination to protect the health of all older adults.

By prioritizing RSV prevention measures now, more individuals will be protected against disease, supporting the health and well-being of individuals and communities, ensuring healthcare systems can mitigate the potential impact of future outbreaks and safeguarding public health nationwide.



### **About the International Federation on Ageing (IFA)**

The [International Federation on Ageing \(IFA\)](#) is an international, non-governmental organization (NGO) with a unique membership base comprising government, NGOs, academics, industry, and individuals in over 80 countries. Now over 45 years old, the IFA has become known as a leading and innovative organization that works across disciplines and sectors toward common goals that improve the lives of older people. Through the IFA's formal relations with the World Health Organization (WHO) and general consultative status at the United Nations and its agencies, the IFA is in the position to advocate directly with member states and contribute to and inform intergovernmental dialogue. Through its [Vaccines4Life](#) program, IFA has worked alongside committed organizations to address barriers to improve adult vaccination rates in the context of healthy ageing.

### **About The Canadian Association of Retired Persons (CARP)**

The [Canadian Association of Retired Persons \(CARP\)](#) is a national, non-partisan, non-profit organization that advocates for financial security, improved health care and freedom from Ageism for Canadians as we age. With over 230,000 members and 25 chapters across Canada, CARP advocates on behalf of older Canadians with all levels of government and collaborates with other organizations on health, ageism, housing, ageism and financial issues.

### **About The National Institute on Ageing (NIA)**

The [National Institute on Ageing \(NIA\)](#) improves the lives of older adults and the systems that support them by convening stakeholders, conducting research, advancing policy solutions and practice innovations, sharing information and shifting attitudes. Our vision is a Canada where older adults feel valued, included, supported, and better prepared to age with confidence.

### **About Canada's National Seniors Advocacy Organization (CanAge)**

[CanAge](#) is Canada's national seniors' advocacy organization, working to improve the lives of older adults through advocacy, policy, and community engagement. We are non-partisan and backed by a pan-Canadian membership base. CanAge has quickly established itself as Canada's national advocate for issues affecting older people in our country, having ramped up operations in 2020 in urgent response to the threat COVID-19 poses to vulnerable seniors in long-term care. Our mission is to advance the rights and wellbeing of Canadians as we age. Our vision is for older Canadians to live vibrant and connected lives. Our work turns intent into impact.