

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 28, 2025

IFA Calls for Action to Improve Access to Pneumococcal Vaccination for Older Adults Across Canada

TORONTO, ON - As Canada grapples with an ageing population and rising healthcare expenditure, the International Federation on Ageing (IFA) is calling on provincial and territorial governments to take urgent action to improve access to pneumococcal vaccination for older adults. Pneumococcal disease is a severe and life-threatening infection that disproportionately affects older Canadians, yet vaccination rates remain alarmingly low.

Pneumococcal disease, caused by the *Streptococcus pneumoniae* (*S. pneumoniae*) bacteria, can lead to pneumonia, meningitis, and bacteremia, particularly in older adults whose immune systems weaken with age. Chronic conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease further increase the risk of serious complications. Despite Canada's goal to achieve an 80% pneumococcal vaccination rate among adults aged 65 and older by 2025, the latest Adult National Immunization Coverage Survey shows that only 54.7% of this population has been vaccinated—far below the target.

The IFA calls for immediate action to address this gap, citing the growing risk for preventable illness and death. Pneumonia, along with influenza, was the 8th leading cause of death in Canada in 2022, with adults aged 80 and older accounting for more than two-thirds of fatalities.

On November 15, 2024, the [National Advisory Committee on Immunization \(NACI\)](#) released updated guidelines recommending that all adults aged 65 and older receive a single dose of pneumococcal vaccine, regardless of previous vaccination. The IFA urges provincial and territorial governments to adopt these guidelines and make vaccines accessible to older adults through publicly funded programs. The IFA also calls for enhanced accessibility to the latest vaccine options, which offer the highest level of protection.

A recent survey by the Canadian Association of Retired Persons (CARP) revealed that 94% of respondents believe the government should fund all NACI-recommended vaccines for older adults. IFA equally emphasizes the importance of targeted public health campaigns, education by healthcare providers, and equitable access across Canada.

"Pneumococcal disease remains an underrecognized threat to older adults. Ensuring vaccination is accessible, affordable, and prioritized within our healthcare system is essential to protect older Canadians and reduce strain on healthcare resources," says Katrina Bouzanis, Director of Policy, Advocacy, and Innovation at the IFA.

The IFA also stresses that many different serotypes—distinct variations of the *S. pneumoniae* bacteria, classified based on their unique surface proteins—are circulating in Canada. New vaccines, which protect against a broader range of serotypes, offer increased protection for older adults and at-risk populations.

To reduce hospitalizations and improve health outcomes, the IFA urges all levels of government to increase funding for pneumococcal vaccines, strengthen public awareness campaigns, and integrate vaccination

into routine healthcare practices for older adults. Immediate action is necessary to ensure that all Canadians, especially those facing barriers to access, can benefit from these life-saving vaccines.

For more information on pneumococcal vaccination and how to access it, visit your local health authority's website or consult a healthcare provider. To learn more about efforts to promote pneumococcal vaccination and protect older Canadians, click here to explore the [IFA webpage](#).

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.