

FUND EXPERT-RECOMMENDED VACCINES FOR SENIORS



Introduction

Vaccines save lives. But right now, older Canadians are being left behind. CARP members have told us loud and clear: they want access to the vaccines they need without barriers, financial hurdles, or the difficulty of navigating inconsistent provincial policies.

CARP believes it is outrageous that in 2025, access to life-saving vaccines is still determined by where you live and how much you can afford. **CARP demands immediate action to fund and deliver expert-recommended vaccines to all seniors—no exceptions, no delays.**

Why It Matters: A Small Investment, A Massive Return

Vaccination protects individuals and communities from serious infectious diseases, contributing to both public health and economic stability. The economic benefits of vaccines extend across sectors—providing cost savings to healthcare systems, reducing lost wages due to illness, and improving productivity. Additionally, vaccines safeguard caregivers and healthcare workers by reducing their exposure to preventable diseases and lowering absenteeism.

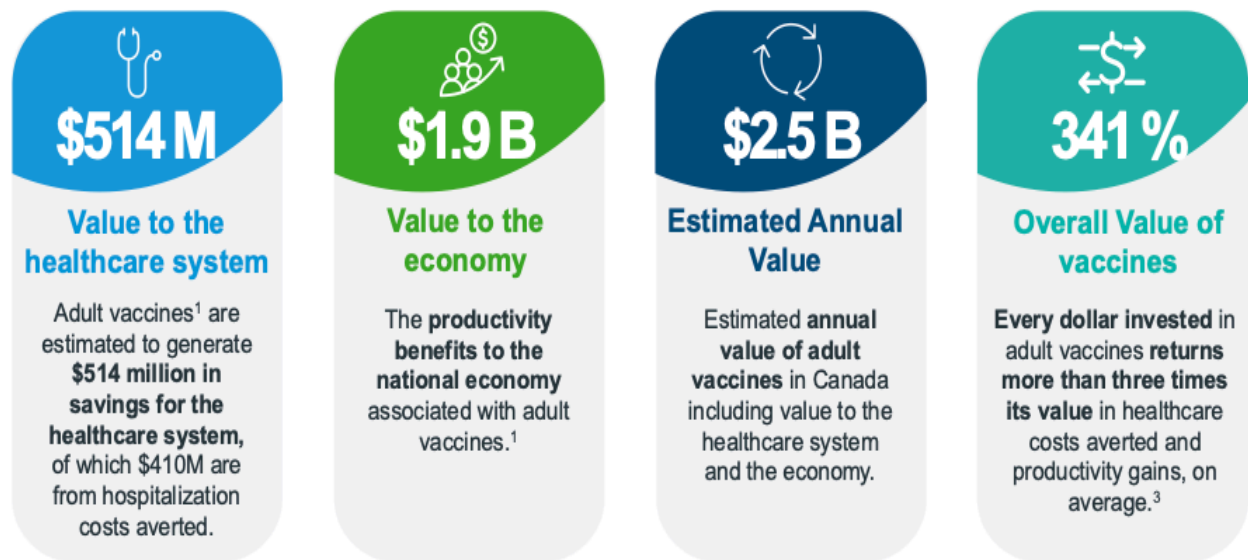
CARP believes the facts speak for themselves. Since 1974, vaccines have saved **154 million lives** globally. The World Health Organization estimates that vaccination prevents between **3.5 to 5 million deaths** worldwide each year. In Canada, vaccines save **\$88 million** in treatment costs annually. Vaccination programs generate **over \$2.5 billion** in value for Canada's economy every year. Increasing adult vaccine uptake by just 10% could generate an **additional \$685 million in value**. Yet, despite all this, vaccines

represent **less than 0.17%** of the national healthcare budget.

Some other key statistics include this: each year, vaccines avert 267,000 outpatient visits, freeing up 57,000 hours of physician time. They prevent 17,000 hospitalizations,

saving \$410 million in hospitalization costs. Another \$49 million is saved in long-term healthcare costs.

CARP asks: why is something this effective—and this inexpensive—still out of reach for so many seniors?



The Issue: Unfair, Unequal, Unacceptable

Despite the overwhelming evidence supporting vaccination, uptake remains far too low among older Canadians. The reasons are clear, and CARP demands they be addressed now.

Seniors face the highest risk of severe complications and death from infectious

diseases. Immunization prevents 40% of hospitalizations due to influenza in adults aged 65 and older. Together with influenza, pneumonia ranks as the eighth leading cause of death in Canada, with 90% of these deaths occurring among approximately 5,375 older Canadians in 2022. Seniors also have the highest mortality rate attributable to

RSV infections. Among hospitalized patients with RSV, 85% of deaths occurred among seniors. However, awareness of RSV is low. A recent national survey by GSK found that among adults aged 50 and older, 46% had never heard of RSV, and only 24% were highly concerned about the virus's impacts.

CARP demands that governments fund and promote these vaccines—not just recommend them.

Currently, funding for vaccinations is inconsistent across provincial and territorial lines. Because healthcare is primarily under provincial jurisdiction, this has led to wide variation in vaccine rollout strategies, eligibility criteria, and public health campaigns.

While the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) may issue strong recommendations, each province decides whether—and how—to fund a vaccine. This results in significant disparities in access. For example, some jurisdictions provide free access to shingles vaccines for specific senior cohorts, while others require

individuals to pay out-of-pocket—sometimes as much as \$400.

For many older Canadians, particularly those on fixed incomes or without private insurance, the cost of vaccination becomes a major barrier. Studies have shown that publicly funded immunization programs are the most effective way to increase vaccine uptake. These programs not only expand access but also signal government endorsement, encouraging higher participation.

CARP is tired of being told that our members' health depends on their postal code. We believe vaccines should be universally accessible and government-funded.

Current Status: Canada's Patchwork Coverage Leaves Seniors Behind

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) issued several recommendations in 2024 regarding adult vaccinations.

For COVID-19, seniors are recommended to receive one dose of the updated vaccine (Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech), and these vaccines are provided free of charge.

For influenza, NACI recommends that seniors receive one of the three enhanced flu vaccines. While not all types may be available in every region, those that are offered are also free of charge.

For RSV, NACI recommends a vaccine program for adults aged 75 and older and suggests consideration for adults aged 60 to 74. However, RSV vaccines are not publicly funded and remain an out-of-pocket expense for all seniors.

Regarding pneumococcal disease, NACI recommends that all adults aged 65 and older receive a single dose of PNEU-C-20.

This is generally available free of charge

across Canada, though implementation and promotion vary by province or territory.

For shingles, NACI recommends that Canadians aged 50 and older receive the Shingrix vaccine, but again, coverage varies widely depending on where you live.

CARP asks: what good is a recommendation if seniors can't afford to follow it?

CARP's Demands

CARP is not asking politely—we are demanding that Canada stop failing its older adults. Our members have waited long enough.

CARP demands that all expert-recommended vaccines be government-funded and equally available across the country. Your health should not be determined by your postal code.

Vaccines must be made widely accessible through multiple channels, including pharmacies and other convenient points of care nationwide.

CARP also calls on the federal government to allocate dedicated funding to provinces

and territories so they can provide all NACI-recommended adult vaccines to seniors.

In addition, the federal government must invest in public awareness campaigns that educate and encourage uptake of these vital immunizations.

CARP believes that the failure to provide life-saving vaccines to seniors is a national disgrace. **Every day of delay puts more lives at risk.**

Conclusion

Vaccination is not just about health—it's about fairness, dignity, and respect for seniors. CARP believes that your ability to access vaccines should never depend on your income or your postal code.

Strengthening vaccine programs will not only improve health outcomes for seniors but also reduce the burden on Canada's healthcare system and support broader public health goals.

CARP is demanding better. All seniors deserve no less.

References

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