



Respiratory and medical microbiology & infectious disease societies encourage flu and COVID-19 vaccines as the pandemic persists

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Ottawa, ON - The Canadian Thoracic Society (CTS) and the Association of Medical Microbiology and Infectious Disease (AMMI) Canada urge all eligible individuals to get vaccinated against SARS-CoV-2 (i.e., COVID-19) and to receive their influenza (i.e., the flu) vaccine for the current influenza season. The COVID-19 pandemic continues, and variants of concern, such as Delta and Omicron, continue to challenge Canadian health systems. As a result, widespread vaccination against both COVID-19 and influenza are more pressing than ever.

Influenza is a highly contagious and infectious respiratory disease. Canadians with immunocompromising conditions and chronic diseases are at higher risk of influenza complications and secondary bacterial infection. Influenza can be especially severe for seniors and children, especially those younger than 6 months who are not eligible to receive the flu vaccine, for whom the mortality rate can be higher than in healthy adults. For individuals with a chronic lung disease such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, pulmonary fibrosis, cystic fibrosis, lung cancer, pulmonary hypertension, and pre- and post-lung transplant, vaccines against COVID-19 and influenza offer personal protection against serious illness and death.

"For those who are eligible, vaccination provides the best health outcomes for everyone. Influenza vaccination can reduce the number of patients who need hospitalization and lessen their impact on a health care system already over-burdened dealing with COVID-19. The vaccinations for COVID-19 and influenza are proven to be safe, are readily available, and can be given at the same time," says CTS President Paul Hernandez.

"Predicting the character and time course of this year's influenza season remains difficult. Getting vaccinated against influenza is the best thing we can do right now to protect ourselves, our loved ones, and our communities, especially as Canadians head into the holiday season" says AMMI Canada President Sarah Forgie.

"Even with a high rate of COVID-19 vaccination, as we transition into a more interactive and open society, the risk of spread, particularly asymptomatic spread, still exists. Healthy people can also spread influenza without showing any signs of illness. Everyone, especially individuals with underlying lung disease, should continue to practice proper hand hygiene and follow all public health measures. This includes the use of well-fitted medical or non-medical masks for periods of time when one has exposure to other individuals, particularly in an indoor space," says CTS President Paul Hernandez.

"It's not too late to get your influenza vaccine, says AMMI Canada President Sarah Forgie. "Influenza and COVID-19 vaccines prevent severe illness and save lives."

The press release and CTS COVID-19 resources are available here: <https://cts-sct.ca/covid-19/>.

The press release and AMMI Canada influenza and COVID-19 resources are available here: <https://ammi.ca/en/resources/>

About the Canadian Thoracic Society

The Canadian Thoracic Society (CTS) is Canada's national specialty society for respirology that brings together specialists, researchers, educators and healthcare professionals working in respiratory, critical care, and sleep medicine. The CTS advances lung health by enhancing the ability of healthcare professionals through leadership, collaboration, research, learning and advocacy, and providing the best respiratory practices in Canada.

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About the Association of Medical Microbiology and Infectious Disease Canada

AMMI Canada is the national specialty association that represents physicians, clinical microbiologists and researchers specializing in the fields of medical microbiology and infectious diseases. Through promotion of the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of human infectious diseases and by our involvement in education, research, clinical practice and advocacy, AMMI Canada aims to serve and educate the public and also to enhance the career opportunities of its members through professional development and advocacy initiatives.

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