

2025-2026 seasonal immunization campaign

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Infectious diseases

Seasonal immunization - an annual health habit!

Winter, accompanied by its many viruses, is almost at our doorstep.

As the cold weather settles in, numerous respiratory viruses are increasingly active. Some of them, such as the COVID-19 virus, the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and the influenza virus, can prove more serious and bring about complications among young children, pregnant individuals, the elderly, residents of a group or community home and persons with a chronic disease or who are immunocompromised. As of September 30th, the population can avail itself of several immunizing agents designed to limit these risks.

Protecting infants against RSV

Second year of the RSV immunization program in Québec

Québec was among the first provinces in Canada to offer an RSV immunization program for infants featuring *nirsevimab*, which is already being successfully administered in Europe (France, Luxembourg and Spain). Results/outcomes: high degree of clinical effectiveness and marked decrease in hospitalizations of infants due to RSV bronchiolitis and pneumonia.

Why is it so important?

- One single dose offers protection for an entire season.
- RSV bronchiolitis is the primary cause of hospitalization of infants less than one year old. *Nirsevimab* reduces the number of hospitalizations and medical evacuations, both of which are stressful for families.

In practice:

- Immunizing an infant at birth provides rapid protection.
- *Nirsevimab* procures immediate passive immunity.
- The dose can be administered along with regular vaccines.

Vaccination against RSV for adults

RSV is a major cause of respiratory infections among the elderly. As of 2024, a vaccine is available to adults aged 60 years or more and in a CHSLD, as well as to adults 75 years or more living in a retirement home for seniors. The current recommendation is for one single dose, as this particular vaccine appears to offer ongoing protection for several years. The vaccine's goal is to decrease the number of hospitalizations, complications related to the virus and deaths associated with RSV.

COVID-19 in 2025-2026

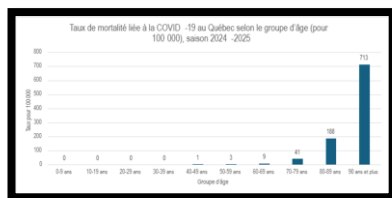
Today's COVID virus is not the same as the one that appeared in 2020: it is more contagious, but the resulting infections are for the most part less severe. This being said, some people run a greater risk of developing a severe form of the disease; ensuring their immunizations are up to date is essential to their well-being.

Groups to prioritize with regard to COVID-19 vaccination in Nunavik

- Individuals aged 50 and older.
- Pregnant individuals.
- Children and adults with a chronic disease.
- Health care workers, to protect persons they treat or come into contact with who are at risk of developing severe infections.

In the case of pregnant individuals, a COVID-19 infection can increase the need for hospitalization or intensive care, and represents a greater risk of obstetric complications such as pre-term births, preeclampsia or intrauterine growth retardation.

As for the elderly, statistics clearly indicate that the risk of death from COVID-19 increases dramatically after the age of 50. Age is notably the main factor as regards vulnerability to the severe forms of the disease.



Infocentre data, September 23,
2025.

COVID-19 is now endemic, with a transmission that is ongoing but mild, and which peaks twice a year, in the summer and again in the winter. The extent or duration of the immunity acquired during the COVID-19 immunization campaigns held from 2020 to 2022 is not clear, hence the importance of updating this protection so as to adapt to the variants that are currently circulating.

Vaccination in Nunavik:

- Free for all persons aged 18 years or more.
- Possibility of administering the vaccine along with that for the flu (this is actually recommended).
- Importance of emphasizing the risk of severe infections to the populations at risk, to maximize the benefits of immunization.

The flu: a serious yet often underestimated infection

Nunavik experiences influenza A and B outbreaks each year which can affect up to 10% of the population. The flu season usually kicks off with a wave of influenza A (H3 or H1), followed by a wave of influenza B. An annual flu vaccine is offered - and recommended - to all Nunavimmiut aged 6 months or over and more specifically, to those persons who are most at risk of developing serious complications.

Why get vaccinated:

- Influenza is one of the top 10 causes of death in Canada (in Québec, ~300 people die of the flu each year).
- The flu can engender serious complications in persons of all ages, including children in good health.
- In the case of persons with cardiovascular diseases, the vaccine can help prevent severe secondary complications, among them infarction, heart failure and stroke (note that the risk of infarction is six times greater than normal during the week following an infection).

Groups to prioritize with regard to influenza vaccination in Nunavik:

Persons with a high risk of complications or hospitalization:

- Children and adults with a chronic disease.
- People age 50 years and older.
- Persons of any age in a CHSLD or a retirement home for seniors.
- Pregnant individuals.

Persons who could transmit the disease to persons with a high risk of complications or hospitalization:

- Individuals living in the same household as persons with a high risk of complications along with the people who care for the latter.
- Health care workers.

Infants under the age of 6 months cannot be vaccinated. Their protection can only be ensured by the vaccination of the mother during her pregnancy, loved ones or relatives and essentially all community members.

While the elderly are usually the group most impacted, influenza can also trigger severe forms of the disease and even death among people of all ages, including children. The 2024–2025 flu season had one of the highest pediatric mortality rates in the United States.

The power of a recommendation regarding vaccination

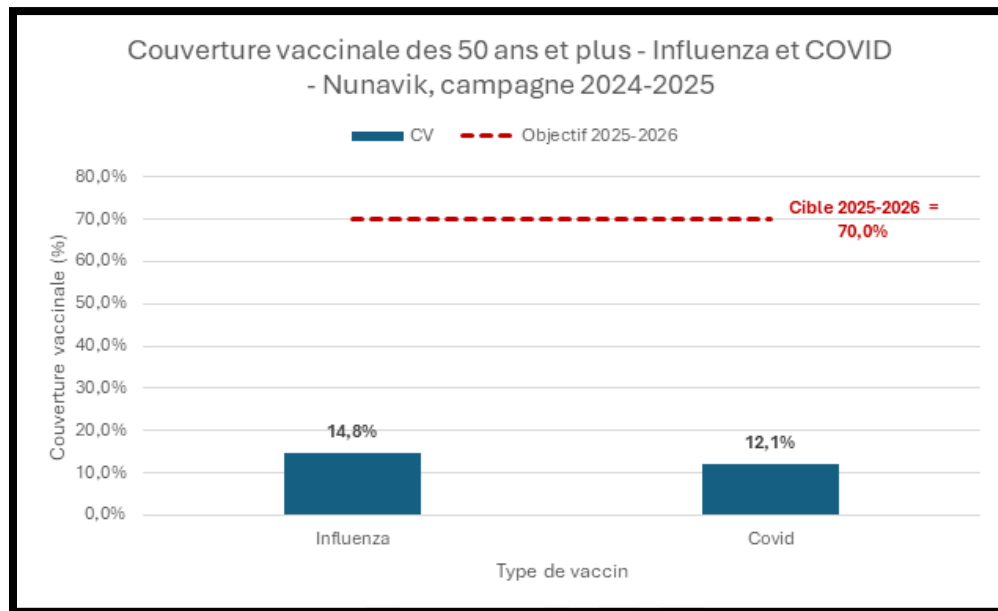
A fervent recommendation from a health care professional, tailored to specific patient circumstances, is one of the most effective means of promoting vaccination. An approach focused on the individual and which takes their concerns and questions into account allows for maximum coverage, particularly among those groups with a high risk of severe infection.

For more information on seasonal immunization:

- Public Health Agency of Canada. (2025). *Respiratory virus immunization updates (2025-2026 season)*. <https://nccid.ca/webcast/respiratory-virus-immunization-updates-2025-2026/>.
- Government of Canada. (Updated in 2025). *Summary of NACI statement of April 30, 2025: Statement on seasonal influenza vaccines for 2025-2026*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/vaccines-immunization/national-advisory-committee-immunization-summary-statement-seasonal-influenza-vaccine-2025-2026.html>.
- Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux du Québec. (Updated in 2025). *Programme d'immunisation contre l'influenza du Québec – Questions et réponses à l'intention des professionnels de la santé*. (In French only.) <https://publications.msss.gouv.qc.ca/msss/fichiers/2025/25-278-19W.pdf>.
- National Foundation for Infectious Diseases. *Vaccines and Heart Health: A Vital Connection*. <https://www.nfid.org/vaccines-and-heart-health-a-vital-connection/>.

Appendix 1

Vaccination coverage among persons aged 50 years or more – Influenza and COVID-19 – Nunavik, 2024-2025 campaign



Appendix 2

Proportion of infants who were administered *Nirsevimab*, according to the type of eligibility (at birth vs. remedial/catch-up) – Nunavik, 2024-2025 campaign

