



Canadian Coalition for Immunization Awareness & Promotion (CCIAP)  
immunize.ca

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## NEWS RELEASE

### **Pneumococcal vaccine may help limit hospitalizations and deaths from influenza**

*New campaign alerts Canadians on how to protect themselves and their loved ones from pneumococcal infection, the most common complication of seasonal and pandemic H1N1 (human swine flu) influenza.*

OTTAWA, ON – September 29, 2009 – *Pneumococcal? What is it? Do I need to worry about it?* That is what Canadians will be asked with today's launch of the Canadian Coalition for Immunization Awareness and Promotion's (CCIAP) pneumococcal immunization awareness campaign – a program that urges Canadians to ask their health care provider about immunization against pneumococcal infection if they fall into the at-risk groups. CCIAP emphasizes that this campaign is especially important in the run-up to the H1N1 influenza pandemic and the influenza season, as pneumococcal infection is the most common complication of influenza, both seasonal and pandemic H1N1.

The campaign is dedicated to increasing the number of people immunized against this infection which can cause pneumonia, blood infection (bacteremia), infection of the fluid surrounding the brain and the spinal cord (meningitis), and ear and sinus infection (especially in children).

### **Vaccines are not just for kids**

Pneumococcal immunization is part of the current infant immunization schedule in all of Canada, so parents should make sure their children have received the full series of pneumococcal conjugate vaccine. Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine is given to children 5 years of age and under.

But others are also at risk – the National Advisory Committee on Immunization recommends that all individuals 65 and over and individuals between the ages of 2 and 65 with diabetes, lung diseases like COPD or other complications of smoking, heart disease, any condition that results in immune deficiency, kidney disease, alcoholism or liver disease be immunized for pneumococcal infection. The pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine is given to adults and children over 5 years of age at high risk of pneumococcal illness.

### **Do it now**

The pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine needs to be given only once in adulthood for most individuals, and can be given any time of year.

“The two types of pneumococcal vaccine are both safe and effective at helping to prevent pneumococcal infection,” says Dr. Bonnie Henry, a public health physician and infectious disease epidemiologist, as well as Chair of CCIAP. “Immunization against this disease is the most effective way to protect you and your family from a potential serious complication of influenza.”

**“ASK your health care provider about pneumococcal immunization today!”**

Taking a positive and educational approach, CCIAP’s pneumococcal immunization awareness campaign aims to connect with at-risk individuals across the country through its website, <http://immunize.ca>, and via promotional and educational materials available free of charge to public health authorities, organizations, and health care providers.

For more information about the “Pneumococcal? What is it and do I need to worry about it?” campaign or pneumococcal immunization, call (613) 725-3769 x 122 or visit [immunize.ca](http://immunize.ca).

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### **About the Canadian Coalition for Immunization Awareness & Promotion**

The Canadian Coalition for Immunization Awareness & Promotion (CCIAP) is a coalition of 28 national organizations. Its mission is to contribute to the control, elimination, and eradication of vaccine-preventable diseases in Canada by increasing awareness of the benefits of immunization for all ages via education, promotion, advocacy and media relations.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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