
Helping Protect Others Matters to Canadians, but Vaccine Uptake Gaps Remain Ahead of the Respiratory Illness Season

New Merck Canada Pulse Report findings show that while Canadians cite helping protect vulnerable individuals and older family members as key reasons for vaccination,¹ 48% reported receiving none of the surveyed respiratory vaccines for influenza, COVID-19, pneumococcal disease (PD) or respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) in the past year, and 64% reported that they were unlikely or unsure whether they will proactively discuss respiratory illnesses and prevention strategies with a healthcare professional in the next six months.^{2,3}

KIRKLAND, QC, August 12, 2026 – As Canadians mark Immunization Awareness Month, new findings from Merck Canada's latest Pulse Report, conducted by Ipsos, suggest many Canadians may be missing opportunities to proactively help protect their respiratory health as the 2026–2027 respiratory illness season approaches.

Helping protect vulnerable individuals in their community and older family members were among the leading motivators Canadians cited for getting vaccinated.¹ Yet the survey revealed an important gap between intention and action. Nearly half (48%) of respondents reported not receiving any of the surveyed respiratory vaccines in the past 12 months,² while almost two-thirds (64%) said they were unsure or unlikely to proactively discuss respiratory illnesses and prevention strategies with a healthcare professional in the next six months.³

Key Merck Canada Pulse Report Survey findings include:

- **Awareness of Respiratory Illnesses:** Familiarity with influenza and COVID-19 was nearly universal among respondents (98% and 99%, respectively), while familiarity was lower for respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) (71%) and pneumococcal disease (66%).⁴
- **Vaccine Uptake Gaps:** Reported vaccination rates differed across the respiratory illnesses surveyed, with 44% reporting receipt of an influenza vaccine and 34% reporting receipt of a COVID-19 vaccine in the past 12 months, compared with 4% for an RSV vaccine and 4% for a pneumococcal vaccine.²
- **Impact of Respiratory Illness on Daily Activities:** Over a quarter of respondents (28%) reported that respiratory illness had disrupted their daily activities in the past year, most commonly causing them to miss gatherings with friends and/or family and use paid sick leave.⁵

"One of the most encouraging findings from this survey is that Canadians clearly recognize the importance of helping protect the people around them," said Matthew Thornhill, Executive Director, Vaccines & HIV Business Unit, Merck Canada. "However, the findings also point to important gaps in awareness and action. While familiarity with influenza and COVID-19

remains high, many Canadians are less familiar with other respiratory illnesses such as RSV disease and pneumococcal disease,⁴ and uptake of vaccines that help protect against these illnesses remains low.² As respiratory illness season approaches, there is an opportunity to support more informed conversations with trusted healthcare professionals and help Canadians better understand prevention strategies, including vaccine options available to them."

Aligned with findings from other surveys in recent years, the Merck Canada Pulse Report found that family physicians, pharmacists and government health websites remain among Canadians' most trusted sources of information on respiratory illness, including vaccine recommendations and eligibility.⁶ This trend highlights the important role healthcare professionals and public health organizations can play in supporting informed, shared decision-making. Through discussions tailored to an individual's health needs, medical history and personal preferences, Canadians can better understand and navigate available prevention strategies, including vaccine options, ahead of respiratory illness season.

Additional findings are available in the [Merck Canada Pulse Report: Respiratory Illnesses & Vaccine Literacy in Canada](#) and accompanying [factsheet](#).

About the Survey

This online survey was conducted by Ipsos on behalf of Merck Canada to better understand Canadians' awareness of respiratory illnesses and their prevention behaviours. The survey focused on four vaccine-preventable respiratory illnesses: influenza (seasonal flu), COVID-19, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and pneumococcal disease (PD), and explored Canadians' awareness of these illnesses, attitudes toward prevention and respiratory health behaviours ahead of respiratory illness season. The survey was fielded online between June 18 and June 23, 2026, among 1,000 Canadians aged 25 to 75 through the Ipsos iSay panel. Quotas and weighting were applied to ensure the sample reflected the Canadian population by age, gender and region. The poll is accurate to within ± 3.8 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what the results would have been had all Canadians aged 25 to 75 been surveyed. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population.

About Respiratory Illness

Respiratory illnesses affect the lungs and airways and remain an important public health concern in Canada.⁷ Respiratory vaccine-preventable diseases, including influenza, COVID-19, RSV and pneumococcal disease, continue to contribute to serious illness, hospitalizations, and healthcare utilization in Canada,^{8,9,10} with older adults and young children among those at greater risk of serious complications.¹¹ Beyond their impact on health, respiratory illnesses can also affect productivity, caregiving responsibilities and participation in work-related activities.¹² Increasing awareness and encouraging informed conversations about respiratory health may help Canadians better prepare for respiratory illness season.

About Merck

At Merck, known as MSD outside of the United States and Canada, we are unified around our purpose: We use the power of leading-edge science to save and improve lives around the world. For more than 130 years, we have brought hope to humanity through the development of important medicines and vaccines. We aspire to be the premier research-

intensive biopharmaceutical company in the world – and today, we are at the forefront of research to deliver innovative health solutions that advance the prevention and treatment of diseases in people and animals. We foster a diverse and inclusive global workforce and operate responsibly every day to enable a safe, sustainable, and healthy future for all people and communities. For more information about our operations in Canada, visit www.merck.ca and connect with us on [LinkedIn](#) @MerckCanada.

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This news release of Merck & Co., Inc., Rahway, N.J., USA (the “company”) includes “forward-looking statements” within the meaning of the safe harbor provisions of the U.S. Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. These statements are based upon the current beliefs and expectations of the company’s management and are subject to significant risks and uncertainties. If underlying assumptions prove inaccurate or risks or uncertainties materialize, actual results may differ materially from those set forth in the forward-looking statements.

Risks and uncertainties include but are not limited to, general industry conditions and competition; general economic factors, including interest rate and currency exchange rate fluctuations; the impact of pharmaceutical industry regulation and health care legislation in the United States and internationally; global trends toward health care cost containment; technological advances, new products and patents attained by competitors; challenges inherent in new product development, including obtaining regulatory approval; the company’s ability to accurately predict future market conditions; manufacturing difficulties or delays; financial instability of international economies and sovereign risk; dependence on the effectiveness of the company’s patents and other protections for innovative products; and the exposure to litigation, including patent litigation, and/or regulatory actions.

The company undertakes no obligation to publicly update any forward-looking statement, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise. Additional factors that could cause results to differ materially from those described in the forward-looking statements can be found in the company’s Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2025 and the company’s other filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) available at the SEC’s Internet site (www.sec.gov).

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