

Do this one thing to keep vulnerable loved ones healthy

With our day-to-day busy schedules, worrying about the flu is likely the last thing on your mind. But did you know that vulnerable populations like seniors, children under five years old, and those with pre-existing health conditions are at an increased risk of developing influenza and related complications year-round?

According to a recent survey by the Canadian Association for Retired Persons, the biggest fear of aging for seniors is a loss of independence. Canadian seniors also have a fear of missing out on life if they are sick with the flu.

Seniors are especially vulnerable to health complications from the flu since aging decreases the body's immune response to influ-

enza vaccines. Contracting influenza can also make chronic health conditions worse.

On average, around 12,000 Canadians are hospitalized and approximately 3,500 die due to influenza-related complications each year, with seniors accounting for 70 per cent of total flu-related hospitalizations and 90 per cent of total flu-related deaths.

Reducing the rates of the flu in this population is a key public health priority, says Dr. Janet McElhaney, specialist in seniors health and scientific director of the Health Sciences North Research Institute in Sudbury, Ont.

Fortunately, there is a flu vaccine available with a higher amount of antigens made spe-

cifically for seniors. Research has shown this high-dose vaccine induces a better immune response in seniors and improves protection against influenza compared to the regular influenza vaccines. This vaccine is only available to seniors if they pay for it as the cost of the vaccine is not yet covered by the provinces. Talk to your healthcare provider to see if this vaccine is right for you.

There is a lot of education that needs to happen when it comes to the flu and its realities for many seniors, says Anthony Quinn, CARP's

director of operations. Our survey provides an opportunity to understand our members' perception of flu, to raise awareness on the impact of flu on our aging population and newer prevention options to ensure seniors can stay active and live independently as long as possible.

Find more information and ways to help ensure this new flu vaccine developed for seniors is publicly funded at www.carp.ca

- www.newscanada.com

How your doctor can now respond immediately

Whenever any of us have a medical concern whether it's a muscle injury or the flu, our first step is usually to hit the web for a diagnosis and guidance. We know it's a dangerous black hole, where information is not always accurate. Fortunately, new digital healthcare advances mean we can now consider turning to our doctor first.

Currently, 73 per cent of Canadian primary care doctors have replaced paper charts with electronic medical records, and many doctors can easily access their patients' medical history from a secure mobile app to provide better, more precise care. Mobile medicine gives doctors access to their patients' medical records in seconds. With everything stored electronically, there's no chance of information getting lost in a pile of papers. Now, a complete overview of your medical history is available anywhere, anytime.

This is especially great news for parents of young children, who can get sick more often and are less able to describe their symptoms. And pediatricians are hopping on board to help answer worried parents' concerns quickly.

Now I can deal with any problem from anywhere on the planet, as long as I'm connected, says pediatrician Dr. Mark Kovacs, who uses a mobile medicine app connected to his office's Telus Health electronic medical records system. When doctors can access a child's information instantly, they can order tests, diagnose symptoms, and treat the problem much faster.

Doctors can communicate electronically with specialists and hospitals outside of their own clinics and practices, even after hours. It also ensures a patient's broader healthcare team has a full view of their entire medical history whenever they need it.

Digital technology is also helping connect younger patients with their healthcare. Doctors are using technology and apps to teach children with chronic conditions at an appropriate age how to help themselves. By doing this, kids can feel confident that they can control their health when they're older or move away from home.

Find more information online at telushalth.com

- www.newscanada.com

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