Vaccination Saves Lives and Billions in Health Care and Financial Costs

AVAC
ADULT VACCINE ACCESS COALITION

Despite the availability of vaccines, illnesses such as flu impose a significant burden on individuals, communities, and our economy. Flu most often results in missed days of work that impact employers, local businesses, and the financial health of families. Flu can also result in more devastating long-term health and financial impacts.

Improving flu vaccination uptake—particularly among adults aged 50 and older—can help reduce preventable hospitalizations, complications, and deaths. It can also help preserve workforce productivity and save billions of dollars annually—keeping our families and economy healthy and prosperous.

Flu Costs the U.S. Economy $29 Billion Annually

A recent economic analysis estimated the cost of illness associated with the flu among adults using heath care utilization costs and labor market data.[1] The study explored the potential health and economic impact of increased flu vaccination rates among adults.

The U.S. experienced high rates of flu illnesses during the 2023-2024 season, which resulted in an estimated $29 billion in total economic burden ($16 billion in direct health care costs and $13 billion in productivity losses).

1. Robert Popovian and Wayne Winegarden, *Influenza's Economic Burden and the Impact of Adult Vaccination* (Global Healthy Living Foundation, 2026).

Flu is an illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. Anyone can get the flu, however, some individuals are at higher risk for severe illness or complications. These include older adults, young children, and high-risk individuals with underlying chronic conditions.

America's Flu Bill

for the 2023-24 Season

Health Care Costs $16,000,000,000

Lost Worker Productivity $13,000,000,000

Total Due:

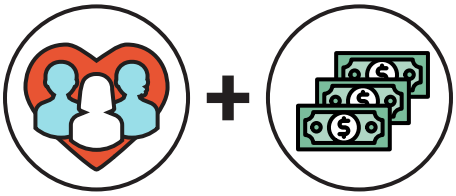
$29,000,000,000*

Avoidable with higher vaccination rates

Increasing Vaccination Rates Can Save Lives and Money

There were over 27,000 flu-related deaths; adults aged 65 years and older accounted for the majority of hospitalizations and deaths, while those aged 18-64 generated the most productivity losses. During this same year, vaccination rates were lower than previous years. Higher vaccination rates were associated with lower rates of death and fewer hospitalizations among adults aged 50 and older.

Declining vaccination rates have resulted in reduced rates of productivity as well as increased health care spending on serious illnesses and hospitalizations. **The study found that if vaccination rates had been at peak levels, the U.S. could have avoided approximately $3 billion in health care spending and saved more than 8,000 lives.**



What Policymakers Should Do

The value of vaccination, including flu vaccination, is clear but a comprehensive policy approach is needed to help improve access and utilization.

1. **VACCINE EDUCATION**
   All vaccination-related messaging delivered by health plans, clinics, pharmacies, community organizations, or government agencies should be simple, consistent, culturally responsive, tailored to varying literacy levels, delivered through trusted messengers, and available in multiple languages.

2. **VACCINATE AT-RISK INDIVIDUALS**
   Prioritize vaccination efforts among older adults and individuals with high-risk conditions by offering vaccination at workplaces and in communities, including mobile vaccine clinics, as well as religious, long-term, and other congregate care venues.

3. **SUPPORT VACCINE PROVIDERS**
   Federal and state governments should review and update payment frameworks across public and private programs to ensure that clinicians are able to cover the costs associated with counseling patients and stocking, storing, and administering vaccines.

4. **PROTECT AND EXPAND QUALITY METRICS**
   Maintain evidence-based quality improvement programs and best-practice standards within hospitals and health systems. These should measure vaccination counseling rates, series completion, and follow-up for high-risk patients.

5. **STRENGTHEN TECHNOLOGY**
   Government should incentivize health systems, providers, and health plans to utilize and encourage electronic patient and health management systems that are seamlessly integrated with Immunization Information Systems to provide information and decision support at every visit.

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About AVAC

The Adult Vaccine Access Coalition (AVAC) is a diverse group of health care providers, vaccine innovators, pharmacies, public health organizations and patient and consumer groups. AVAC's mission is to raise awareness, improve access and increase utilization of vaccines among adults. Near universal access to immunizations for children has been one of the greatest public health accomplishments of the 20th century. AVAC seeks to achieve the same level of success for adult immunization.

www.adultvaccinesnow.org