

Understanding Challenges in Accessing Priority Vaccines for Seniors Living Outside Long-Term Care in British Columbia

In Canada, vaccination rates among seniors for priority vaccines are below national targets, with less than 40% vaccinated against shingles and pneumococcal disease, and fewer than 70% vaccinated against influenza, missing the 80% goal set for 2025. British Columbia's senior vaccination rates are even lower, particularly in rural areas and low-income communities, largely due to inadequate transportation options and unclear vaccination policies. Seniors in long-term care generally have higher vaccination rates thanks to coordinated care, while those in the community face challenges such as limited access and financial barriers.

Physical and environmental barriers

Consent and autonomy

Cost barriers

Policy gaps

Generational differences

Staff shortages

Disparities across living settings

Information challenges


Challenges of accessing priority vaccines in British Columbia

Physical and environmental limitations consist of inaccessible environments, including individual factors, such as fear, and facility-level inconsistencies. Cost is a barrier because the priority vaccines have limited or no funding. Consent and autonomy challenges arise with proxies. Epidemiological data, cost-effectiveness assessments, and provincial priorities create policy gaps. In terms of generational differences, older adults who are over 80 years old trust vaccines more than those ≤ 60 years old, who express more scepticism about vaccines. Misinformation undermines trust where clear information is lacking. Living/care settings determine access and recommendation. Staffing shortages and the need for more trained immunizers. Workforce shortages limit consistent rollout.


Strategies for improving access to priority vaccines in British Columbia

Enhancing vaccine access for older adults involves on-site, mobile, and extended delivery options, supported by system reforms that simplify roles and reduce fragmentation. Expanding partnerships with family doctors, pharmacists, and care providers can increase uptake. Ongoing, targeted education is essential for building confidence and combating misinformation.


STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING PRIORITY VACCINE ACCESS




On-site, mobile and extended delivery



System Reform



Partnership with Physicians & Pharmacies



Ongoing and Targeted Education