



The Value of Shingles Vaccination

Enabling Healthy and Productive Aging

The case for prevention

Canada faces a productivity challenge. As a greater share of the population moves into older age, sustaining economic growth will depend increasingly on the health, functioning, and participation of adults over 50. Healthy aging is therefore not only a public health objective—it is a critical economic strategy.

Preventable conditions that limit individuals' ability to work, care for others, and remain active in their communities directly undermine productivity. Addressing these conditions requires a stronger emphasis on prevention, with adult vaccination representing a practical and undervalued tool.

Adult vaccination as a pillar of healthy aging

Adult immunization plays a central role in maintaining functional health and independence as people age. Yet, unlike childhood vaccination programs, it remains fragmented and under-integrated within Canada's healthcare systems. This gap limits the country's ability to fully leverage prevention to support both population health and economic performance.

Shingles vaccination provides a clear and compelling example of what is at stake—and what is possible. It demonstrates how targeted investment in adult immunization can deliver measurable benefits across health, healthcare system, and economic outcomes when supported by the right policies and infrastructure.

Limiting productivity and participation

Shingles affects approximately one in three Canadians, with risk and severity increasing with age. It disrupts an individual's health and daily functioning, often causing pain, rash, and fatigue. For some, shingles leads to severe and persistent nerve pain that can last months or years, further reducing quality of life and limiting independence. Among those with chronic conditions, shingles may trigger more complications and healthcare use.

These impacts on individuals translate into broader health system and economic consequences. Shingles increases use of medications, hospitalizations, and visits to primary care, specialist services, and emergency departments. At the same time, it disrupts workforce participation and diminishes people's capacity to provide informal care and volunteer—essential ways older Canadians contribute to a functioning and sustainable society.

Vaccination delivers economic and health returns

Shingles vaccination directly addresses these challenges by preventing illness and reducing severity. The economic case is strong. A national cost-benefit analysis conducted by Evaluate, an economic and social policy consultancy, shows that if 80 per cent of adults aged 50 and older were vaccinated, Canada could achieve:

- \$1.5 billion in productivity gains
- \$4.2 billion in health gains
- \$816 million in healthcare cost savings

With an estimated cost of \$3.8 billion to public healthcare systems, this translates to a societal return on investment of 1.69, meaning every \$1 invested generates \$1.69 in combined benefits.

These findings highlight that shingles vaccination is not simply a preventive health measure—it is a strategic investment. By preserving functional health, it enables older adults to remain active in the workforce and in their communities, directly contributing to improved productivity while reducing avoidable strain on healthcare services.

The implementation Gap: Missed opportunity

Despite this value, uptake remains limited. Only 39 per cent of eligible Canadians are vaccinated, with lower coverage among rural, lower-income, and underserved populations.

This gap reflects systemic barriers: inconsistent public funding, variable insurance coverage, fragmented delivery models, limited public awareness, and insufficient integration into routine care. Importantly, adult vaccination is not yet embedded as a standard component of healthy aging strategies or chronic disease management.



Unlocking value through system alignment

Realizing the full value of shingles vaccination requires more than clinical guidance—it depends on putting the right systems in place. This includes aligning vaccination within national and provincial healthy aging strategies, expanding and harmonizing public funding, and integrating delivery across providers in primary care, pharmacies, and communities.

Embedding vaccination into routine care—particularly within chronic disease pathways—would help normalize uptake, while coordinated public awareness efforts could strengthen demand. Improved data and surveillance systems are also essential to tracking progress and ensuring equitable access.

Taken together, these actions would do more than improve shingles vaccination rates. They would strengthen adult immunization as a core component of preventive care, advance a more coordinated and proactive health system, and drive productivity through healthy aging. Canada has the mandate and mechanisms to support adult vaccination; the opportunity lies in using them most effectively.

For the full research, see our impact paper [*Healthy Aging and Building Economic Resilience: The Value of Shingles Vaccination.*](#)

This work was supported by GSK Canada.