

## Vaccine-Preventable Disease, Life Course Immunization, and Chronic Disease Management

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, and diabetes account for 74% of global deaths.<sup>1</sup> As the global population ages, the economic and health impacts of NCDs are growing, necessitating innovative solutions to manage and prevent these conditions.<sup>2 3 4</sup> Vaccine-preventable diseases (VPDs), particularly respiratory infections (VPRDs), represent a modifiable risk factor that can significantly impact the incidence and progression of NCDs and can be devastating and costly in their own right, often leading to a cascading health decline. Despite this, adult immunization remains underutilized as a tool for NCD prevention and management. As we approach the mid-point of the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing and governments look towards the United Nations General Assembly High-Level Meeting on Non-Communicable Diseases in 2025, it is imperative that stakeholders call for actions that will leverage the value of adult immunization for the prevention and better management of NCDs.

Decision-makers across governments, health systems, and society should set the following priorities for action:

1. Update 21st century health policies to invest in prevention, and ensure parity in investment, infrastructure, and targets for vaccines for adults as with for children.
2. Embrace a shift from the traditional mindset to reframe vaccinology - success in immunization should not be measured only by complete prevention infection, but also by reducing severe outcomes and chronic sequelae.
3. Reflect in national vaccination policies the added urgency to vaccinate adults, especially older adults, to help protect against VPRDs, as well as prevent the negative impact on NCDs.
4. Embed adult vaccination literacy and education across the healthcare provider and patient advocacy ecosystems and at the community level, for example through the WHO's Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities, to establish uptake of vaccines as a key strategy to reduce the impact and cost of NCDs for individuals and communities.
5. Undertake additional research and analysis investigating and further validating the relationship between respiratory infection impact on NCDs and the aging process.
6. Organize across multiple disciplines to form a society-wide consensus on the importance of adult vaccine uptake for the workplace and the overall value to the economy.

## Conclusion

Integrating routine adult immunization into NCD management and prevention offers a promising opportunity to reduce the burden of these diseases and improve overall health outcomes to support healthy aging. By supporting immunization across the life course, the burden of chronic disease associated with VPDs can be lessened, as well as the burden of respiratory infections, which together will decrease economic and health system costs, and people living with NCDs can be better supported in their health management – maintaining their functional ability, intrinsic capacity, and independence – ultimately, allowing for healthier longevity.

## Signatories

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- 1 World Health Organization. (2024). Noncommunicable Diseases. World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/noncommunicable-diseases>
- 2 Pan American Health Organization (n.d.) Economics of Noncommunicable Disease. PAHO. [www.paho.org/en/topics/economics-ncds#:~:text=Tobacco%20use%2C%20physical%20inactivity%2C%20the,people%20below%20the%20poverty%20line.](http://www.paho.org/en/topics/economics-ncds#:~:text=Tobacco%20use%2C%20physical%20inactivity%2C%20the,people%20below%20the%20poverty%20line.)
- 3 OECD. (n.d.) Health: Policy Areas. <https://www.oecd.org/health/Expenditure-by-disease-age-and-gender-FOCUS-April2016.pdf>
- 4 OECD/European Union (2022), Health at a Glance: Europe 2022: State of Health in the EU Cycle, OECD Publishing, Paris, [https://doi.org/10.1787/507433b0-en.](https://doi.org/10.1787/507433b0-en)