

Older Adults' Perspectives on a COVID-19 Vaccine

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Vaccines can prevent or reduce the severity of many diseases and are important for people of all ages, including older adults. In October 2020, the University of Michigan National Poll on Healthy Aging asked a national sample of adults age 50–80 about their interest in and opinions on the flu vaccine and a future COVID-19 vaccine.

About two in three older adults (63%) indicated they received a flu shot last flu season. Seven in ten either received one since August 2020 (34%) or intended to get one this flu season (38%). Nearly half of adults age 50–80 (49%) believed that getting a flu vaccine is more important this year compared to other years, 44% said it is just as important, and 7% said it was less important.

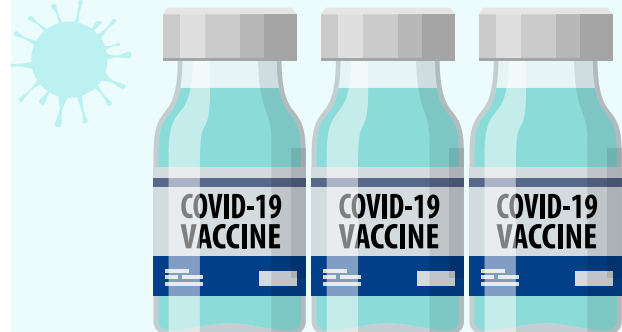
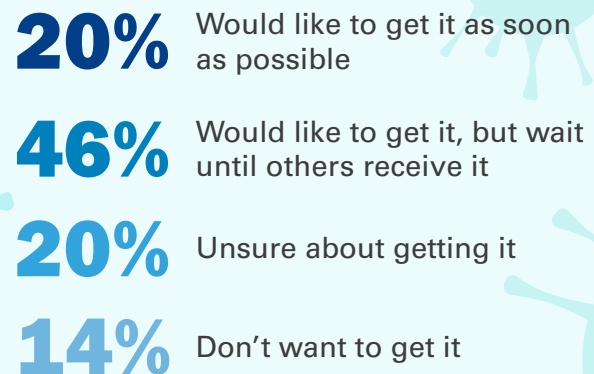
When asked how likely they would be to get a COVID-19 vaccine when available and if no cost to them, 58% of older adults indicated they would be likely to get a COVID-19 vaccine (33% very likely, 25% somewhat likely), 28% said they were unlikely (11% somewhat unlikely, 17% very unlikely), and 14% were unsure or did not know.

Interest in getting a COVID-19 vaccine was more common among those age 65–80 compared with those 50–64 (63% vs. 54%), men compared with women (64% vs. 52%), and Whites compared with Hispanics and Blacks (63% vs. 51% vs. 40%). Individuals who lived with others, had higher household incomes, or had more education were also more likely to report they would get a COVID vaccine.

Half of adults age 50–80 (52%) said they personally knew someone who had COVID-19, and 2% reported having had it themselves. One in five older adults (19%) indicated they personally knew someone who died

Views on Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine

AMONG ADULTS AGE 50–80



from COVID-19. The likelihood of getting a COVID-19 vaccine did not differ based on whether respondents knew someone who had COVID-19 or who died from it.

In deciding whether to get a COVID-19 vaccine, older adults rated the following as very important: how well it works (80%), their own research (56%), and if it was

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recommended by their doctor (52%), public health officials (42%), or family and friends (13%). Cost was rated as very important by 30% of older adults.

One in five older adults (20%) indicated they want to get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible. Nearly half (46%) said they want to wait to get a COVID-19 vaccine until others have received it, 20% were unsure about getting it, and 14% did not want to get it.

Those more likely to say they want to get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible included individuals age 65–80 (24%, compared with 17% of those 50–64), men (25%, compared with 15% of women), and Whites (24%, compared with 14% of Hispanics and 7% of Blacks). Those with underlying conditions, higher household incomes, or more education were also more likely to want to get vaccinated as soon as possible.

Three in five older adults (61%) strongly agreed that people who are high risk should be given priority to get a COVID-19 vaccine. Nearly half (46%) strongly agreed that they are worried about the safety of a vaccine that is developed quickly. About one in four said they would be willing to be in a clinical trial to test a COVID-19 vaccine (9% strongly agree, 15% somewhat agree).

Implications

Public health experts agree that getting a flu vaccine is especially important this year, and that a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine will be essential to ending the pandemic. Once COVID-19 vaccines are available, older adults will be one of the priority groups for immunization. This poll found that nearly three in five adults age 50–80 were likely to get a COVID-19 vaccine. However, almost half said they want to wait until others have received it, and a similar percentage was worried about the safety of a vaccine that is developed quickly.

In addition to its effectiveness, more than half of older adults said their own research and their doctor's recommendation would be very important factors in determining whether to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. To optimize vaccination among older adults, it will be critically important for health care providers, vaccine manufacturers, policymakers, and the media to share accurate, easily understandable information about the effectiveness, safety, and out-of-pocket costs of a COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available.

Data Source and Methods

This National Poll on Healthy Aging report presents findings from a nationally representative household survey conducted exclusively by Ipsos Public Affairs, LLC ("Ipsos") for the University of Michigan's Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation. National Poll on Healthy Aging surveys are conducted by recruiting from Ipsos KnowledgePanel®, the largest national, probability-based panel in the U.S.

This survey module was administered online from October 9, 2020 to October 27, 2020 to a randomly selected, stratified group of older adults age 50–80 (n=1,556). The sample was subsequently weighted to reflect population figures from the U.S. Census Bureau.

The completion rate was 75% among panel members contacted to participate. The margin of error is ±1 to 3 percentage points for questions asked of the full sample and higher among subgroups.

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National Poll on Healthy Aging Team

Preeti Malani, MD, MSJ, MS, Director

Jeffrey Kullgren, MD, MS, MPH, Associate Director

Erica Solway, PhD, MPH, MSW, Associate Director

Dianne Singer, MPH, Production Manager

Matthias Kirch, MS, Data Analyst

The Regents of the University of Michigan

Jordan B. Acker, Huntington Woods
Michael J. Behm, Grand Blanc
Mark J. Bernstein, Ann Arbor
Paul W. Brown, Ann Arbor
Shauna Ryder Diggs, Grosse Pointe

Denise Iltich, Bingham Farms
Ron Weiser, Ann Arbor
Katherine E. White, Ann Arbor
Mark S. Schlissel (ex officio)

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