

## Influenza/pneumonia related hospitalizations for First Nations in Alberta

### *Influenza/pneumonia related hospitalization rate by age group and First Nations status, both sexes, 2015-2017*

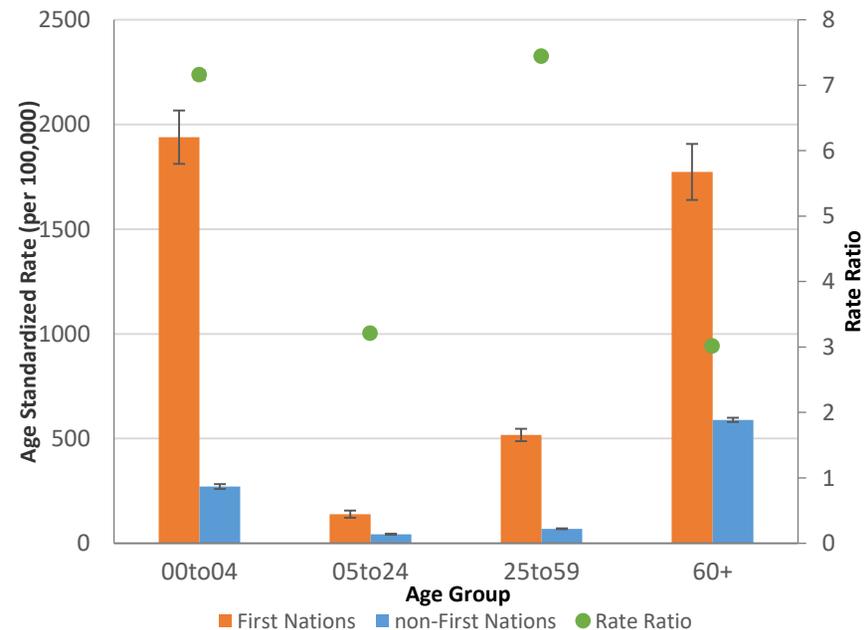
Influenza/pneumonia are ranked among the top 10 leading causes of death in Canada.<sup>1</sup> Influenza is a respiratory illness caused primarily by the influenza A and B viruses and is usually transmitted by respiratory droplets through coughs and sneezes. While most people will recover within 7 to 10 days, some can progress to severe complications such as pneumonia or lung failure, especially in high risk populations such as children younger than 5, elderly, pregnant women, and people living with chronic diseases.<sup>1</sup> In today's *First Nations – Health Trends Alberta*,<sup>2</sup> we present age-specific hospitalization rates where the main reason for hospitalization was coded as either influenza or pneumonia. These rates are presented for both sexes combined during 2015-2017.

### Hospitalization rates due to influenza/pneumonia are higher for First Nations compared to non-First Nations

During 2015-2017, the annual average number of influenza/pneumonia related hospitalizations was 987 for First Nations and 6,886 for non-First Nations. Despite accounting for only 4 per cent of the Alberta population, First Nations people accounted for 12.5 per cent of all influenza/pneumonia hospitalizations over this time period.

The rates of influenza/pneumonia hospitalization were higher for First Nations people compared to non-First Nations in every age category. For First Nations, the rate was highest among children under the age of 5 (1,939 per 100,000), followed by those 60 years of age and older (1,773 per 100,000). This was reversed among non-First Nations: the highest hospitalization rate was in the 60+ age category (589 per 100,000), followed by children under 5 (271 per 100,000).

Differences between rates in First Nations and non-First Nations were highest for children under 5 and for those 25 to 29 years of age: in both groups, the rates of hospitalization were around 7 times higher for First Nations compared to non-First Nations people. Vaccination is one way to avoid infections that may lead to these hospitalizations: vaccines are widely available in Alberta for both influenza and pneumococcal disease.



1 Government of Canada. Flu (influenza): For health professionals. (2019) <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/flu-influenza/health-professionals.html#a5>

2 This is the 34<sup>th</sup> in a series of First Nations-specific Health Trends compiled in collaboration by Alberta Health and the Alberta First Nations Information Governance Centre (AFNIGC). To suggest future topics, please contact the AFNIGC ([communications@afnigc.ca](mailto:communications@afnigc.ca); 403-539-5775).