

A Manifesto for Equitable Access to Vaccination

October 2026

Patients for Prevention

The European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations (EFA) is a European level patient-led organisation which advocates to improve the lives of all people living with allergies and airways diseases, across 24 European countries and 38 member organisations. Together with our members, we represent allergy, asthma, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) patients in European level policy and initiatives that affect their health and support national action. Access to vaccination is essential for our patient community and a key part of our advocacy efforts.

Every Breath Matters

In 2022, there were around 363 500 deaths in the EU resulting from respiratory system diseases, equivalent to 7.0% of all deaths among residentsⁱ. In Europe, infectious respiratory diseases have an immense public health burden, with substantial annual variation driven by influenza seasons, COVID-19 waves, population aging, and vaccination coverage. Lower respiratory infections (LRIs), especially pneumoniaⁱⁱ, are responsible for most of these deaths. It is also especially important that newcomers whose home countries may have low vaccination coverage are able to access vaccines and secure the protection they provide.

Respiratory health is fundamental to overall health, life expectancy and quality of life. For people living with chronic respiratory conditions, infectious diseases like COVID 19, influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), pneumococcal disease, herpes zoster, and pertussis are not simply seasonal illnesses, they can lead to severe complications, hospitalization, long-term health decline, and preventable deaths.

Vaccination is one of the most effective tools available to reduce these risks. Vaccination prevents 3.5-5 million deaths annually worldwide from vaccine-preventable diseases, including respiratory infections such as influenza, RSV, pneumococcal disease, COVID-19 and pertussisⁱⁱⁱ. Yet, too many respiratory patients across Europe continue to face barriers in accessing recommended vaccines. These barriers include lack of awareness, inconsistent recommendations, financial obstacles, unequal availability and accessibility, language barriers and cultural differences, and missed opportunities within healthcare systems. Additional outreach efforts may be necessary to reach Chronic Respiratory Disease (CRD) patients, especially those with asthma, whose self-management of their condition can mean they do not see themselves as patients per se.

We believe that every respiratory patient deserves timely, equitable, and informed access to vaccines.

Human rights should be a centre of patient care. Vaccines are a fundamental right which need to be used to protect people, especially vulnerable groups like people living with chronic diseases, children and the elderly and frail people, from the threat of infectious diseases.

Our European, national and local level policies need to catch up with the threat of respiratory infectious diseases and need to be updated and harmonised so that no-one is left behind.

Our Calls to Action

1. Make Vaccination Accessible

Governments and health systems should secure sufficient doses for effective vaccine coverage and ensure that respiratory patients can receive respiratory infection vaccines and boosters conveniently, preventively, through primary care, specialist clinics, pharmacies, hospitals, and community vaccination services integrated and updated in the standard care pathway.

2. Remove Financial Barriers

Recommended vaccines should be affordable and, where possible, publicly funded for individuals with chronic respiratory diseases for preventing the increased risk of severe respiratory infections and health decline. Barriers preventing people living in certain areas from accessing vaccines should also be removed and the right to health should override “postcode lotteries”.

3. Identify and Reach Patients with chronic respiratory disease

Healthcare providers and national healthcare systems should proactively identify patients who have a chronic respiratory disease for vaccination and invite them, their immediate family and any vulnerable carers before each respiratory virus season.

4. Support Healthcare Professionals

Healthcare professionals should receive up-to-date education on vaccination against respiratory infections and the benefits for people living with chronic respiratory diseases, so they can confidently discuss recommendations, address patients' questions, personalize care and integrate it into their routine disease management.

4. Improve Public Awareness

National and local vaccination campaigns should ensure that people with a chronic respiratory disease are informed and educated about the importance of the various vaccines that are relevant to them and clearly explain:

- Who is eligible.
- Why vaccination matters.
- Address risks and hesitancy.
- When vaccines should be received.
- How patients can access them.

Communication should be culturally appropriate, available in multiple languages, and accessible for people with disabilities.

6. Strengthen Patient-centered and Integrated Care

Every respiratory consultation should include an opportunity to review vaccination status, within an integrated multidisciplinary approach alongside a discussion on preventive care.

7. Promote Equity

Health authorities should actively address disparities in vaccine uptake among underserved populations, including rural communities, minority ethnic groups, older adults and adults not self-sufficient, people with disabilities, and socioeconomically disadvantaged populations.

8. Invest in Respiratory Prevention

Governments should continue investing in epidemiological surveillance, prevention and vaccine research, implementation and behavioral science, and public health programmes that improve protection against respiratory viruses both at individual and population level.

9. Include the Respiratory Patient Voice

People living with chronic respiratory conditions and patient organisations should be involved in designing vaccination policies, communication campaigns, education and peer support, and healthcare services.

10. Measure Success in Respiratory Health

Health systems should routinely monitor vaccine coverage among eligible respiratory patients, identify gaps, and publish transparent data to support continuous improvement. Efforts should also be made to harness the Digital Health Data Space potential for making national data systems interoperable across Europe.

Our Vision

We envision a future where every respiratory patient:

- Knows about COVID19, influenza, pneumonia, pertussis, herpes zoster, and RSV vaccination and their benefits.
- Can access recommended vaccines without unnecessary barriers.
- Receives consistent evidence-based advice from healthcare professionals.
- Is empowered to make informed healthcare decisions.
- Benefits from healthcare systems that prioritise prevention as much as treatment.

Our Shared Responsibility for Lung Health

Protecting respiratory health requires collaboration.

- Patients and families commit to seeking reliable information and discussing vaccination with their healthcare professionals.
- Healthcare professionals commit to recommending vaccines according to current clinical guidance.
- Policymakers commit to creating fair and effective vaccination programmes based on inclusion, not exclusion.
- Patient organisations commit to educating, advocating, and amplifying patient voices.
- Society commits to protecting vulnerable people through evidence-based patient and public health measures.

Our Commitment

We call upon the European Commission, the ECDC, EMA, Member State governments, local healthcare authorities, healthcare providers and workers regardless of their rank, researchers, patient organisations, industry partners, and communities to work together to ensure that no respiratory patient is left unprotected because of preventable barriers to vaccination.

Breathe Better, Get your Vaccine!

EFA's 'Breathe Better, Get your Vaccine' project promotes access to treatment, personalised management of EFA disease areas and comorbidities, and emotional support, with a focus on improving access to vaccination for the respiratory community. This manifesto is part of the project and builds momentum for improved immunisation in Europe. The manifesto is written together with our members: Österreichische Lungunion (Austria), Asthma-en Allergiekoeppel vzw (Belgium), Hengityслиitto (Finland), Fédération Française des Associations et Amicales de malades, Insuffisants ou handicapés Respiratoires, (FFAAIR, France), Asthma and Allergy Patients Association (Georgia), Deutscher Allergie- und Asthmabund e.V. (DAAB, Germany), Astma og ofnæmisfélag Íslands (Iceland), APS Respiriamo Insieme (Italy), Associação de Asma Grave (AAG, Portugal), Nacionalno udruženje Alergija i ja (Allergy and Me, Serbia), Društvo Atopijski dermatitis (Slovenia), Federación Española de Asociaiones de Pacientes Alérgicos y con Enfermedades Respiratorias (FENAER, Spain), Asma y alergia España (Spain), Astma- och Allergiförbundet (Sweden), Longfonds (the Netherlands), and Pulmonary Hypertension Ukrainian Rare Disease Association (PHURDA, Ukraine).

Interested in improving access to vaccination in Europe? Join the campaign!

Get in touch with us through our email projects@efanet.org

Acknowledgements

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ⁱ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/SEPDF/cache/37379.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <https://platform.who.int/mortality/themes/theme-details/topics/indicator-groups/indicator-group-details/MDB/lower-respiratory-infections>

ⁱⁱⁱ https://www.who.int/health-topics/vaccines-and-immunization/#tab=tab_1