

# COVID-19 VACCINE: Frequently Asked Questions for Congregate Living Settings

Updated Monday, January 18, 2021

This document will provide answers to frequently asked questions (FAQ) about the COVID-19 vaccine which will be available to Congregate Living Settings.

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**Note:** As additional information about COVID-19 vaccines and future phases of [Ontario's Vaccine Distribution Implementation Plan](#) become available, updates will be posted to [york.ca/COVID19Vaccine](http://york.ca/COVID19Vaccine)

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# About the Vaccine

## 1. What vaccines are available?

The vaccines currently being offered to individuals living and working in congregate living settings are the [Moderna COVID-19 vaccine \(mRNA-1273\)](#) and the [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 mRNA vaccine](#).

- The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine was approved by Health Canada on December 9, 2020 for use in people 16 and older
- The Moderna vaccine was approved by Health Canada on December 23, 2020 for use in people 18 and older

Health Canada only approves a vaccine if it is supported by very robust scientific data and evidence. After approval, Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada continue to monitor the on-going safety and effectiveness of all approved vaccines.

Additional vaccines currently being reviewed by Health Canada include those developed by AstraZeneca and Janssen (pharmaceutical companies of Johnson & Johnson).

## 2. Is the vaccine safe if I have an egg allergy or other allergies?

The list of ingredients for the Pfizer BioNTech or Moderna vaccine do not list egg protein as an ingredient. If you know you have allergies to any of the ingredients in the [Moderna COVID-19 vaccine](#) or the [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine](#), you should not receive it.

## 3. Can you contract COVID-19 from the vaccine?

No. This is not a live vaccine and does not contain the virus; therefore the vaccine cannot give recipients infection or disease (COVID-19).

# Getting the Vaccine

## 1. Who is eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

In alignment with the [National Advisory Committee on Immunization's recommendations](#), individuals living and working in congregate living settings have been identified as a priority group to receive the vaccine. As there is a limited amount of vaccine available in the early stages of the provincial immunization program, vaccine implementation will proceed in three phases, with more people to be vaccinated as additional shipments arrive. Although planning is underway to distribute vaccine to all congregate living settings, settings that are specific to the senior population will be prioritized initially.

## **2. How is the vaccine administered and how does it work?**

Both the Moderna vaccine and the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine are given as a needle in the upper arm. Both vaccines require two doses with the second dose typically being administered between 21 days and 28 days later, depending on the vaccine and current guidelines from Ontario's Ministry of Health and the Public Health Agency of Canada.

The vaccine works by teaching our cells how to make a protein that will trigger an immune response without using the live virus that causes COVID-19. Once triggered, our body then makes antibodies. These antibodies help us fight the infection if the real virus does enter our body in the future.

## **3. Where will I be able to get the COVID-19 vaccine?**

Consenting residents, staff and essential caregivers of congregate living settings will be contacted to address their specific needs. They will be able to receive their vaccine on-site at an internal location specified by the home or through a local community immunization clinic.

For residents who are unable to provide personal consent, staff of the congregate living setting will work with substitute decision-makers to obtain consent prior to immunization.

## **4. What will I need before I get my immunization?**

You will be asked for/to:

- Your completed COVID-19 vaccine consent form, if paper consent is being used by the facility
- Provide your Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) health card or Status card (or any government issued photo ID if no OHIP card) to confirm your appointment, if requested
- Complete active screening to see if you have [signs or symptoms](#) associated with COVID-19 prior to your immunization (Note: individuals with symptoms of COVID-19 will be deferred from receiving the vaccine until their symptoms have resolved)
- Wear a mask or face covering, wash your hands and practice physical distancing from others (at least 2 metres) if accessing immunization in a common area
- Stay for 15 minutes after you receive the vaccine to monitor for any adverse events following immunization

For more information, please refer to:

- [Moderna COVID-19 vaccine: What you should know](#)
- [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine: What you should know](#)

If you are feeling unwell and do not feel you can proceed with the immunization, please let facility staff know as soon as possible.

## **5. Is the vaccine mandatory?**

Receiving the COVID-19 vaccine is voluntary, but highly encouraged for those who are eligible - not only for personal protection, but for the safety and well-being of others.

## **6. What should I expect after I receive my vaccine?**

Like other medications and vaccines, the COVID-19 vaccine can cause side effects. Examples of common side effects that have been reported for the Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine include pain, redness and swelling at injection site, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain and fever. Although not everyone will experience side-effects of the vaccine, those who report minor side-effects do not experience them for very long.

York Region Public Health, the Ministry of Health and the Public Health Agency of Canada monitor reports of adverse reactions and conduct follow-up investigations as needed.

For the vaccine to work best, you need to get two doses, typically administered between 21 days and 28 days later, depending on the vaccine and current guidelines from Ontario's Ministry of Health and the Public Health Agency of Canada. It can take up to 14 days following your second dose to achieve full protection.

## **7. Do I need to continue to follow public health safety measures after I receive the COVID-19 vaccine?**

Yes. As we continue to learn more about the protection provided by the vaccine and about COVID-19, our current advice is to continue to follow Public Health precautions to reduce the risk of infection. As we learn more, the recommendations may be modified.

Even as vaccinations begin in Ontario, we must continue to follow public health measures to keep everyone safe and healthy: avoid social gatherings, practice physical distancing, wear a mask when required and wash your hands frequently.

Please continue to also practice any health measures specific to your congregate living setting.

## **8. Who should I contact with questions after I received the vaccine?**

If you have any questions or concerns, prior to or after receiving the vaccine, please contact your health-care provider and congregate living setting staff.

For more information and updates related to COVID-19 vaccines, visit [york.ca/COVID19Vaccine](https://york.ca/COVID19Vaccine) or the [provincial](#) or [federal](#) government websites.