

COVID-19 and Vaccine Info Sheet



#sleevesupON

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is an infection caused by a new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) which was first recognized in December 2019. The virus spreads through particles when an infected person coughs, sneezes, sings, talks or breathes and others come in contact to those particles.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

- The most common symptoms are: cough shortness of breath, fever, chills, tiredness and loss of smell or taste. Some people may experience atypical symptoms.
 - Please refer to the Ministry of Health website [here](#) for the most up to date list of symptoms.
- Some people infected with the virus have mild to no symptoms, while others have symptoms can have moderate to severe symptoms. Seniors and those with chronic conditions are at most risk for severe symptoms and complications.
- For some severe cases of COVID-19 infection, hospitalization and even death can occur.

How can I prevent COVID-19 from spreading?

- Get immunized with a COVID-19 vaccine
- Follow infection prevention and control practices and adhere to public health measures
- Frequent hand hygiene
- Cough or sneeze in arms or tissue instead of in hands
- Minimize touching face, nose, or mouth with hands or clean hands prior to doing so.
- Stay home when you are sick
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

What is the COVID-19 vaccine?

The COVID-19 vaccine protects against the SARS-CoV-2 virus (also known as COVID-19). COVID-19 vaccines work by telling your body how to make harmless protein found in the virus and start building antibodies that know how to fight the real virus when you come in contact with it.

At present, in Canada, the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, the Moderna vaccine, and the AstraZeneca vaccine are approved for use. Two of these vaccines, the Pfizer-BioNTech and the Moderna, use a method called messenger RNA (mRNA), which is like a code that tells the cells in your body how to make the piece of the outer lining of the virus, for a short time. This piece of the virus cannot hurt you, but it is enough for your immune system to learn how to recognize and be ready to fight off the virus. Additional info on mRNA vaccines can be [found here](#) from Public Health Ontario.

The AstraZeneca vaccine uses a method called a viral vector. This means that that the vaccine uses a harmless virus, like one of the viruses that causes the common cold, as a “delivery system”. This vector virus produces the spike protein that is found on the virus that causes COVID-19. This piece of the virus cannot hurt you, but it is enough for your immune system to learn how to recognize and be ready to fight off the virus. Additional information on viral vector-based vaccines can be [found here](#) from Public Health Ontario.

How many doses do I need?

You need 2 doses of the COVID-19 vaccines currently approved in Canada (Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca).

- The Pfizer vaccine doses are given at least 21 days apart.
- The Moderna vaccine doses are given at least 28 days apart.
- The AstraZeneca vaccine doses are given at least 28 days apart.

The duration of the second dose may vary during the mass vaccine distribution efforts by the government. Your healthcare provider will let you know when you need your second dose. You need to get both doses to make sure you have the best protection against COVID-19.

Are there different types of COVID-19 vaccines? Currently, there are three COVID-19 vaccines available in Canada, two of which are mRNA vaccines, the other is a viral vector-based vaccine. They all protect against the COVID-19 virus but they are made differently by different companies.

Information on this sheet obtained from the following

- MOH info sheet: About COVID-19 Vaccines
- Ontario Health: What you need to know about the COVID-19 vaccines
- Alberta Health Sciences: COVID-19 Vaccine
- Public Health Ontario: What You Need to Know About COVID-19 Vaccines
- Public Health Ontario: COVID-19 Vaccines: Viral Vector-Based Vaccines



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Who should have the COVID-19 vaccine?

You should get the COVID-19 vaccine if you are age 16 years and older for the Pfizer vaccine, or 18 years and older for the Moderna vaccine. Currently, the AstraZeneca vaccine can be administered to those age 60 years and older; this may change.

Everyone is at risk of COVID-19. The vaccine is very important for people who are more likely to be in contact with the virus because of where they work or live.

It is also important for people who have a high risk of complications from COVID-19 to get this vaccine. This includes people who:

- have health problems such as heart, lung, kidney, or liver problems, high blood pressure, or diabetes
- have a lot of extra weight
- are over the age of 60

The vaccine is free and will be offered in priority to everyone over the age of 16 years for the Pfizer vaccine or over the age of 18 years for the Moderna vaccine. Certain populations, such as the elderly and essential health care workers will be prioritized for the vaccine. See Ontario's Ethical Framework for COVID-19 vaccine distribution, [here](#).

How well does the vaccine work?

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are expected to be 94-95% effective after two doses. The AstraZeneca vaccine is expected to be about 62% effective after two doses. It is important to receive both doses. Protection offered by the first dose is lower than what is achieved after the second dose.

Who should NOT have the COVID-19 vaccine?

You may not be able to have the vaccine if you:

- have an allergy to parts of the vaccine
- had a severe or unusual side effect after this vaccine or one like it
- are under age 16 years for the Pfizer vaccine or under age 18 years for Moderna vaccine
- have had another vaccine in the last 2 weeks

Check with your doctor or a public health nurse before you get the vaccine.

Talk to your doctor to find out if the vaccine is right for you if you:

- have a weak immune system (because of a medicine you take or a health problem)
- have an autoimmune disorder (like rheumatoid arthritis or lupus)
- are pregnant or breastfeeding

There is not enough evidence to know if the vaccine is safe and protects against COVID-19 in these groups. Always tell your healthcare provider if you have allergies

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- Public Health Ontario: COVID-19 Vaccines: Viral Vector-Based Vaccines

What are the side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine?

Ongoing studies on the Pfizer and Moderna vaccine indicate no serious side effects found to-date. As with other vaccines, some people can develop mild side effects in the days following immunization that are generally not serious and go away on their own. Side effects include one or more of the following:

- pain at injection site
- redness and swelling
- tiredness
- headache
- muscle pain, body aches or joint pain
- mild fever or chills
- swollen glands/lymph nodes (less frequently)

Allergic reactions are rare but can occur after receiving the vaccine. Symptoms of allergic reaction include:

- hives (bumps on the skin that are often very itchy)
- swelling of face, tongue or throat
- difficulty breathing

or if you have had a side effect from a vaccine in the past.

Clinic staff are prepared to manage an allergic reaction should it occur. You will be asked to remain accessible to clinic staff for at least 15 minutes. While serious side effects are rare, if any of the following reactions occur within three days of receiving the vaccine, seek medical attention right away or call 911:

- hives (bumps on the skin that are often very itchy)
- swelling of face, tongue or throat
- difficulty breathing
- very pale colour and serious drowsiness
- high fever (over 40 C)
- convulsions or seizures
- other serious symptoms (e.g. "pins and needles" or numbness)

Are there additional measures I need to follow before and after receiving the vaccine?

- Wait 14 days after receiving the another vaccine before receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Do not receive any other vaccines until at least 28 days after you receive the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, unless required for post-exposure prophylaxis.
- Wait at least 28 days after you have all doses of the COVID-19 vaccine before you try to get pregnant