

Ministry of Health

COVID-19 Vaccine Information Sheet

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This document provides basic information only and is not intended to provide or take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, or legal advice. In the event of any conflict between this document and any applicable emergency orders or directives issued by the Minister of Health, Minister of Long-Term Care, or the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH), the order or directive prevails.

The following COVID-19 vaccines have been authorized for use in Canada by Health Canada: [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine](#), [Moderna COVID-19 vaccine](#), [AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine](#), and [COVISHIELD COVID-19 vaccine](#).

All [vaccines for COVID-19](#) authorized for use in Canada have been evaluated by Health Canada, using rigorous standards. Health Canada will continue to monitor to ensure all vaccines are safe and effective.

Please read this information sheet carefully and ensure all your questions have been answered by a healthcare provider before receiving the vaccine.

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is an infection caused by a new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). COVID-19 was recognized for the first time in December 2019 and has since spread around the world to cause a pandemic. COVID-19 is mainly passed from an infected person to others when the infected person coughs, sneezes, sings, talks or breathes. It is important to note that infected people can spread the infection even if they have no symptoms. [Symptoms of COVID-19](#) can include cough, shortness of breath, fever, chills, tiredness and loss of smell or taste. Some people infected with the virus have no symptoms at all, while others have symptoms that range from mild to severe.

How do the COVID-19 vaccines protect against COVID-19?

All vaccines work by presenting our body with something that looks like the infection so that our immune system can learn how to produce natural protection. This natural protection then helps to keep us from becoming sick if we come into contact with the real virus in the future. You cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine. More detailed information on how COVID-19 vaccines provide protection can be found on [Public Health Ontario's \(PHO\) COVID-19 Vaccines](#) webpage and [What You Need to Know About COVID-19 Vaccine](#).

All three vaccines are effective against symptomatic, lab-confirmed disease and hospitalization after the first dose. In large studies where people were given two

doses of the vaccine, each of the vaccines were shown to work very well at preventing people from becoming sick with lab-confirmed COVID-19. Vaccine efficacy 14 days after dose one and before dose two is estimated to be over 90% for Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna and over 70% for AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD. Vaccine efficacy after dose two at the recommended interval is estimated to be over 90% for Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna and over 80% for AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD.

Who can receive these vaccines?

A complete vaccine series should be offered to individuals without contraindications to the vaccine and in currently identified priority groups (as outlined in [Ontario's vaccine distribution plan](#)).

- The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine should be offered to individuals 16 years of age and older.
- The Moderna COVID-19 vaccine should be offered to individuals 18 years and older.
- The AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine and COVISHIELD should be offered to individuals 18 years of age to 64 years of age.

Before receiving the vaccine, inform the healthcare provider if:

- You are currently feeling unwell or have signs and symptoms of COVID-19
- You have had a previous allergic reaction to a COVID-19 vaccine or any ingredients in the COVID-19 vaccines, or any other vaccine.
- You have any allergies or allergic conditions
- You are or could be pregnant or are breastfeeding
- You are immunosuppressed due to disease or treatment or have been diagnosed with an autoimmune condition.
- You have fainted or became dizzy after receiving a past vaccine or medical procedure or you have a fear of needles. The healthcare provider may offer supports to assist you, for example recommending that you receive the vaccine lying down to prevent fainting.
- You have a bleeding disorder or are taking medication that could affect blood clotting. This information will help the healthcare provider prevent bleeding or bruising from the needle.
- You have received any other vaccine (not COVID-19 vaccine) in the past 14 days.

Guidance for the use of COVID-19 vaccines in special populations including for example, breastfeeding or pregnant individuals, individuals with allergies, adolescents at very high risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19, individuals with autoimmune conditions, or individuals who are immunocompromised due to disease or treatment, is available in the [Vaccination Recommendations for Special Populations](#) guidance

document. If you have questions about whether the vaccine is right for you based on your medical condition, talk to your health care provider.

Who should delay receiving these vaccines?

- Individuals who have received another vaccine (not a COVID-19 vaccine) in the previous 14 days.
- Individuals with symptoms of an acute or co-existing illness; these individuals should wait until symptoms have completely resolved in order to avoid attributing any complications resulting the illness to vaccine-related side effects.
- Individuals with symptoms of COVID-19. To minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission when these individuals arrive at an immunization clinic/venue, they will be instructed to follow current local public health measures and be encouraged to get tested.
- Symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals who have been advised to self-isolate due to suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection or due to close contact with a COVID-19 case should not attend a vaccine clinic and should wait to get their vaccine until their isolation period is over.

How is the vaccine administered?

The vaccine is given as a needle in the upper arm (into the deltoid muscle) and will require two doses of the same vaccine product given. The province is following [recommendations from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization \(NACI\)](#) to extend the time interval of the second dose of COVID-19 vaccine up to 4 months.

- For the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, the recommended interval for the second dose is 4 months. after the first dose.
- For the Moderna vaccine, the recommended interval for the second dose is 4 months after the first dose.
- For the AstraZeneca and COVISHIELD vaccine, the recommended interval for the second dose is four months,

Except in extenuating circumstances with the mRNA vaccines, the full vaccine series should be completed with the same COVID-19 vaccine product (i.e. individual should get the same vaccine for their first and second dose). Vaccines of different types (e.g. mRNA, viral vector) should be considered different vaccines and should not be used in the same series.

What are the ingredients in the vaccines?

Ingredients	Pfizer-BioNTech	Moderna	AstraZeneca/ and COVISHIELD

Medical	mRNA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mRNA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mRNA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-replicating viral vector (ChAd)
Non-medical	Lipids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ALC-031 • ALC-0159 - a polyethylene glycol (PEG) • 1,2-Distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine (DSPC) • Cholesterol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,2-distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine (DSPC) • Cholesterol • PEG2000 DMG SM-102 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disodium edetate dihydrate (EDTA) • Ethanol • L-Histidine • L-Histidine hydrochloride monohydrate • Polysorbate 80
	Salts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dibasic sodium phosphate dihydrate • Monobasic potassium phosphate • Potassium chloride • Sodium chloride 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acetic acid • Sodium acetate • Tromethamine • Tromethamine hydrochloride 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Magnesium chloride hexahydrate • Sodium chloride
	Sugar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sucrose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sucrose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sucrose
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water for injection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water for injection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water for injection

It is important to review this list carefully as some people may be allergic to these ingredients, including **polyethylene glycol**, and **polysorbate** and/or **tromethamine**. These can rarely cause allergic reactions. Polyethylene glycol is found in products such as medications, bowel preparation products for colonoscopy, laxatives, cough syrups, cosmetics, skin creams, medical products used on the skin and during operations, toothpaste, contact lenses and contact lens solution. Polyethylene glycol can also be found in food or drinks, but is not known to cause allergic reactions from food or drinks. Polysorbate is found in medical preparations (such as vitamin oils, tablets, and anticancer agents) and cosmetics. Tromethamine is a component in contrast media, oral and parenteral medications.

What are the side effects of the vaccine?

COVID-19 vaccines, like all vaccines, can cause side effects, although not everyone gets them. The most commonly reported side effects after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine are local reactions including pain, redness or swelling at the injection site tiredness, headache, muscle pain, joint pain, chills, and mild fever.

Ongoing studies on these COVID-19 vaccines indicate **serious side effects found to-date** are extremely rare. People who have received the vaccine in these studies continue to be monitored for any longer-term side effects.

Clinic staff are prepared to manage a severe allergic reaction should it occur.

When receiving your second dose of COVID-19 vaccine, **tell the healthcare provider if you had any side effects after the first dose.**

When should I call my health care provider?

If you experience side effects that are worrying you or do not seem to be going away after a few days, contact your health care provider or seek medical attention.

Go to the nearest **emergency department** or call **911** if any of the following adverse reactions develop within three days of receiving the vaccine:

- hives
- swelling of the face or mouth
- trouble 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)

You can also contact your [local public health unit](#) to ask questions or to report an adverse reaction.

When should I return for my second dose?

If this is your first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, be sure to return for your second dose as instructed by the vaccination clinic. **You should book an appointment to receive the next dose right away.** It is important that you receive two doses of the vaccine. Protection against COVID-19 is not complete until after the second dose of vaccine is received. Bring your immunization record when you come for your second dose. **It is very important that you receive the second dose even if you experienced side effects the first time.**

Who should I contact with any questions?

If you have any questions, please speak with your health care provider or the person providing the vaccine.