

COVID-19 Vaccine FAQ

The following is a summary of current information answering common questions about the COVID-19 vaccines.

How does the COVID-19 vaccine work?

- The vaccine helps to prevent you from getting sick with COVID-19 by giving your body instructions to make antibodies that will fight the virus if you come into contact with it.
- There are currently two vaccines approved for use in Canada, Pfizer-BioNTech, and Moderna. Both these vaccines work by providing instructions to the body using mRNA that tells the body to make a harmless protein similar to what is found on the COVID-19 virus. This protein triggers the production of antibodies. The mRNA and protein are then broken down by the body.
- These vaccines are not live, meaning they do not have the COVID-19 virus in them. You cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine. These vaccines also do not affect or alter your DNA.

For more information about the authorized vaccines visit, <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/covid19-industry/drugs-vaccines-treatments/vaccines.html>

Is the COVID-19 Vaccine safe?

- Yes, before any vaccine can be used in Canada, it must be approved by Health Canada. A vaccine will only be approved if it is safe, effective, meets manufacturing standards, and if the benefits outweigh the risks.

****It is important to know that the vaccine trials did not include populations with specific health conditions, for example pregnant and breastfeeding women, individuals with autoimmune conditions or immunocompromised. If you have a specific health condition, please talk to your health care provider before getting the vaccine. ****

I already had COVID-19, should I still get the vaccine?

- Yes, you may develop some natural immunity from having COVID-19, but it is unknown how long that immunity will last. It is also possible to get re-infected with COVID-19. Getting the vaccine is the best way to stay protected!
- If you have confirmed COVID-19 or suspected symptoms, you should wait to get the vaccine until after you recover.

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

It is normal to experience some mild side effects following vaccination, this simply means that the vaccine is doing its job. Side effects are most common after the second dose.

Some common side effects include:

- Soreness at the injection site
- Feeling more tired than usual
- Chills
- Mild headache

These side effects should go away a few days after the vaccination.

Serious side effects following vaccination are rare but may occur. These include:

- Hives
- Swelling on the face or mouth
- Trouble breathing
- Very pale in colour and severe drowsiness
- High fever (> 40°C)
- Seizures or convulsions
- Numbness or feeling 'pins and needles'

Allergic reactions following vaccination are also rare but may occur. Most allergic reactions will occur shortly after the vaccine is given. This is why you are asked to wait for 15 minutes after receiving the vaccine. **Symptoms of an allergic reaction include hives (itchy bumps on the skin), swelling on the face, tongue, or throat, and/or difficulty breathing.**

Can I get the vaccine if I have allergies?

- If you have had a serious allergic reaction (e.g., anaphylaxis) to any ingredients in the vaccine or a previous dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, you should not receive the vaccine. The list of ingredients will be reviewed with you before receiving the vaccine.
- If you have had a serious allergic reaction to substances not included in the vaccine (e.g., food allergy, eczema, hay fever, asthma, insect allergy), you likely can receive the vaccine, but please talk to your health care provider first. You will also be asked to wait 30 minutes after receiving the vaccine to monitor for a severe allergic reaction.

***If you have any concerns about allergies, talk to your healthcare provider before receiving the vaccine!**

When will I be able to get the vaccine?

We currently cannot provide specific details about when and how the vaccine will be provided by the Humber River Family Health Team. We will be updating our website with information as it becomes available, so check our website regularly. If you would like to receive email announcements, please make sure your email is up to date on your file by calling your family physicians office.

What we do know is that the vaccine is being rolled out in three different phases. We are currently in phase 1 and we expect to receive the vaccine in phase 2 or 3.

- **During phase 1, vaccines are reserved for:**
 - ❖ Residents, staff, and caregivers in congregate care settings for seniors
 - ❖ Health care workers
 - ❖ Adults in First Nations, Metis, and Inuit populations
 - ❖ High-risk home care recipients
- **Phase 2 is expected to begin in the spring. During phase 2, vaccines will be given to:**
 - ❖ Older adults, beginning with ages 80 and older
 - ❖ Individuals and workers in high-risk congregate care settings
 - ❖ Essential Workers
 - ❖ At-risk populations
- **Phase 3 is expected to begin in the summer. During phase 3 the vaccine will be publicly available to anyone who wants it.**

For more information about these phases, <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/getting-covid-19-vaccine-ontario>

References

Government of Ontario

<https://files.ontario.ca/moh-covid-19-vaccines-fact-sheet-en-2021-02-05.pdf>

Women's College Hospital

<https://www.womenscollegehospital.ca/patients-and-caregivers/covid-19-vaccine-multi-language-information-sheets>

Toronto Public Health

<https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/8cdb-COVID-19-vaccination-flyer.pdf>

Ontario College of Physicians of Ontario

<https://www.afhto.ca/sites/default/files/2021-01/2021-01-08%20OCFP%20Sample%20E-mail%20-%20%20Answering%20Patient%20Questions%20about%20COVID-19%20Vaccines.pdf>