# Questions and Answers for: Administration of Publicly Funded COVID-19 vaccine in Ontario Pharmacies

This Questions and Answers document accompanies the most recent Executive Officer (EO) Notices on the Administration of the Publicly Funded COVID-19 Vaccines in Ontario Pharmacies available on the [ministry website](#).

Participating pharmacies administering the publicly funded COVID-19 vaccine must be familiar with their agreement with the ministry respecting COVID-19 administration and use of the provincial COVID-19 vaccine solution-COVAX$_{ON}$ (COVID-19 Vaccine Agreement)[1]. These Questions and Answers primarily relate to the public funding of pharmacy administration of the COVID-19 vaccine and are not intended to provide information about the requirements in the COVID-19 Vaccine Agreement.

For more information on:

- [COVID-19 vaccine immunization](#) in Ontario,
- Health Network System claims issues, pharmacy staff may contact the ministry's Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) Help Desk and refer to the [Ontario Drug Programs Reference Manual](#)
- Injection training and scope of practice, pharmacy staff should contact the [Ontario College of Pharmacists (OCP)](#)

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[1] The COVID-19 Vaccine Agreement includes requirements respecting vaccine ordering, storage and handling (such as cold chain requirements and incident management) and access to and use of the Provincial COVID-19 Vaccine Solution-COVAX$_{ON}$ (if access to the Solution has been granted to the pharmacy).

# Overview

**1. What is the pharmacist's role in the administration of the publicly funded COVID-19 vaccine to Ontarians?**

Currently, Part A pharmacists, registered pharmacy students, interns and pharmacy technicians who are members of the OCP, have completed the required injection training and in accordance with OCP guidance can administer the publicly funded COVID-19 vaccine to eligible individuals in participating pharmacies. Please refer to the Executive Officer Notice for more information about the criteria for participating pharmacies. Participation by pharmacies is voluntary.

**2. What are the publicly funded COVID-19 vaccines that are available to pharmacies?**

Please refer to the ministry website for the most recent EO Notice entitled "Administration of the Publicly Funded COVID-19 Vaccines in Ontario Pharmacies – Billing".

Inclusion of a product in the EO Notice does not guarantee supply of the product through the participating pharmaceutical distributors.

**3. How will the public know which pharmacies in Ontario are providing publicly funded COVID-19 vaccines?**

Pharmacies that provide the COVID-19 vaccine will be listed on the ministry website at this link.

**4. How do pharmacies obtain the publicly funded vaccines?**

All pharmacies with an HNS Subscription Agreement and COVID-19 Vaccine Agreement will receive the publicly funded COVID-19 vaccines (at no cost) through

McKesson or Shoppers Drug Mart depending on their pharmaceutical distributor. Vaccine ancillary supplies (e.g., needles, syringes) will be provided based on the vaccine allocation to the distributors. Note that supplies may not arrive at the same time due to different delivery requirements.

5. **Are vaccinations at pharmacies available by walk-in or appointment?**

COVID-19 vaccination at pharmacies is currently available **by appointment only**. There may be situations where walk-ins may be possible in the future depending the vaccine supply. Patients will be directed to visit the ministry's online location finder to find their local pharmacy and make an appointment.

# Eligibility

6. **Are all individuals eligible for the publicly funded COVID-19 vaccine administered at a pharmacy?**

No. Eligible pharmacy staff can only administer the publicly funded COVID-19 vaccine in pharmacies in accordance to the manufacturer's direction and according to the province's vaccine rollout plan to eligible individuals. Please refer to the ministry website for the most recent EO Notice entitled "Administration of the Publicly Funded COVID-19 Vaccines in Ontario Pharmacies – **Eligibility**" .

Eligibility criteria at the pharmacy is expected to change as COVID-19 vaccine supply becomes available.

7. **Are patients required to provide consent before pharmacists administer the COVID-19 immunization?**

Yes. Completion of a consent form is required by the patient or the patient's authorized representative or substitute decision maker prior to administering the COVID-19 vaccine.

8. **Can a person who does <u>not</u> have an Ontario health card number still receive the publicly funded COVID-19 vaccine at a pharmacy?**

Yes. Eligible pharmacy staff can administer the publicly funded COVID-19 vaccine to someone *without* an Ontario health card number provided they have other valid documentation.

See Question #29 for further details on the claims submission process.

**9. Can a patient be an ODB recipient and <u>not</u> have an Ontario health card number?**

Yes. There may be circumstances when a patient who is an eligible ODB recipient does <u>not</u> have an Ontario health card number, such as an individual who is issued a temporary health number by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services that is used until the official Health Card is issued, or an individual who is not eligible for an Ontario health card number but has a paper Drug Benefit Eligibility Card. In these cases, the temporary eligibility number must be used for the HNS claims submission.

**10. Can a pharmacist still submit a claim for payment for the administration of the COVID-19 vaccine if a patient forgot to bring his/her Ontario health card number?**

No. If the patient has an Ontario health card number, then the pharmacist needs the patient's Ontario health card number in order to submit the claim for payment through the HNS.

**11. What other forms of identification will be accepted for patients that do <u>not</u> have an Ontario health card number?**

If a pharmacy has been granted access to the Provincial COVID-19 Vaccine Solution-COVAX$_{ON}$, then the COVID-19 Vaccine Agreement requires documentation of alternate forms of identification to confirm date of birth if the patient does <u>not</u> have an Ontario health card number. Pharmacy staff must document the alternate form of ID on the vaccine record. Other forms of patient identification noted in that system may include:

- Birth Certificate
- Employee ID
- First Nations ID
- Passport
- MRN (Medical Record Number)

- Out of Province ID
- Driver's License

# Ministry Payment

12. **How much does the ministry pay pharmacy immunizers to administer the COVID-19 vaccine?**

The ministry pays the pharmacy $13.00 for the costs associated with administering an injectable publicly funded COVID-19 vaccine, when a claim for payment is submitted through the HNS.

13. **How much does the ministry pay a pharmacy if the immunizer is required to inject epinephrine as emergency treatment for patients experiencing a serious adverse drug reaction due to the publicly funded COVID-19 vaccine?**

The ministry will reimburse pharmacies the acquisition cost (no mark-up, dispensing or service fee) of approved epinephrine auto-injection products up to the total amount reimbursed (i.e., see Table 2 of the EO Notice) when used in this circumstance.

See Question #29 for further details on the claims submission process.

14. **Does the ministry pay the pharmacist directly or the pharmacy?**

The ministry pays the participating pharmacy.

# Pharmacist Training

15. **Are all Ontario pharmacists able to administer the COVID-19 vaccines to eligible Ontarians?**

Only Part A pharmacists, registered pharmacy students, interns and registered pharmacy technicians who are members of the OCP and who have completed an approved training program and in accordance with OCP guidance can administer the publicly funded COVID-19 vaccine by injection in participating pharmacies. The eligible pharmacy staff who have registered the required injection training are listed on the OCP's member registry website.

For more information on pharmacist's training please contact the Ontario College of Pharmacists.

# Pharmacy Participation

16. **Will all Ontario pharmacies provide the publicly funded COVID-19 vaccine?**

    No. Only participating pharmacies that meet the criteria in the most recent version of the EO Notice entitled "Administration of the Publicly Funded COVID-19 Vaccines in Ontario Pharmacies – Eligibility", are eligible to provide the publicly funded COVID-19 vaccine.

    Please refer to the ministry website for the most recent EO Notice.

17. **What is the Provincial COVID-19 Vaccine Solution-COVAX$_{ON}$?**

    The Provincial COVID-19 Vaccine Solution-COVAX$_{ON}$ is the database that holds all COVID-19 vaccine administration for the province. It is separate from the HNS and all pharmacies are required to enter patient vaccine administration information as well as inventory supply in this system. The fee paid to pharmacies for administering the COVID-19 vaccine includes pharmacy services relating to accessing and using the Provincial COVID-19 Vaccine Solution-COVAX$_{ON}$.

    The requirements for accessing and using the Provincial COVID-19 Vaccine Solution-COVAX$_{ON}$ can be found in the COVID-19 Vaccine Agreement. Access to and use of the Solution is conditional on the pharmacy being granted access to the Provincial COVID-19 Vaccine Solution-COVAX$_{ON}$ by the ministry.

    Resource information regarding the Provincial COVID-19 Vaccine Solution-COVAX$_{ON}$ including support, training, forms and reference materials for pharmacies are available. Pharmacies should contact their head office or the [Ontario Pharmacists Association](#) for these resources.

    **Note:** When entering information in the Provincial COVID-19 Vaccine Solution-COVAX$_{ON,}$ immunizers **must** identify their individual health professional status (i.e., they must use their own User ID).

18. **What happens if there is a system failure and the pharmacy is not able to enter vaccine or inventory information in the Provincial COVID-19 Vaccine Solution-COVAX$_{ON}$?**

    In the event of system failure, pharmacies must ensure a manual contingency plan is in place for keeping track of COVID-19 vaccine administration and future logging in the Provincial COVID-19 Vaccine Solution-COVAX$_{ON.}$

For example, at a minimum, pharmacies should ensure there is supply of consent forms, vaccine information forms and daily patient rosters printed in the event the Provincial COVID-19 Vaccine Solution-COVAX$_{ON}$ system is not available.

19. **What type of personal protective equipment (PPE) do pharmacists need in order to administer the COVID-19 vaccine?**

Resources and guidance for PPE can be found on the [Ontario College of Pharmacists](#) website.

20. **Is PPE available for pharmacies that administer the COVID-19 vaccines?**

Yes. The ministry has a dedicated supply of PPE that is available through the provincial stockpile for participating pharmacies that administer the publicly funded COVID-19 vaccine.

Note that there is an allocation framework in place depending on the current supply and not all orders for PPE may be filled. The ministry's supply of PPE must ONLY be used to support the activity of pharmacies administering the publicly funded COVID-19 vaccine.

21. **How do I access the ministry supply of PPE to support the administration of the COVID-19 vaccine?**

Pharmacies may order PPE by accessing the Remedy online intake[2] form at this link: [https://ehealthontario.on.ca/en/health-care-professionals/ppe-intake?a=ppe-intake](https://ehealthontario.on.ca/en/health-care-professionals/ppe-intake?a=ppe-intake)

Pharmacies that belong to a banner or chain corporation should work through their corporate head office, who may centrally coordinate order and facilitate distribution. Independent pharmacies may order directly from the website.

22. **What other procedures must be followed during the COVID-19 pandemic?**

Pharmacy professionals should continue to follow the guidelines set out by public health officials. Pharmacies have a shared responsibility for informing and educating

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[2] Note, the access for PPE is the same as for accessing for the UIIP program. Pharmacies may use the same form / process.

the public on COVID-19, including promoting infection control and preventative measures. Resources can be found on the [Ontario College of Pharmacists](#) website.

# Documentation Guidelines

23. **What are pharmacists required to document when providing the COVID-19 immunization vaccine to eligible patients?**

    For the purpose of post-payment verification, pharmacists must keep a record of the following:

    - Record of name and address of patient.
    - Record of alternate ID with contact information if applicable.
    - Record of name of vaccine administered, dose, lot number, expiry date, time, date and location of immunization, route and site of administration.
    - Record of name, pharmacy address and signature of individual who administered the vaccine.
    - Provide a written or electronic record of the COVID-19 immunization record to the patient, which includes the pharmacy's contact information and arrangements for the second scheduled dose (if applicable) at the same pharmacy location

- Record any serious adverse events following immunization that result in the administration of epinephrine, and the circumstances relating to the administration of the substance.
  - Please refer to question #31 and #32 regarding reporting requirements for adverse events following immunization.
- Records documenting compliance with any requirements to access and use the Provincial COVID-19 Vaccine Solution-COVAX$_{ON}$ under the COVID-19 Vaccine Agreement.

24. **How long must I keep the COVID-19 immunization and/or an epinephrine auto-injector administration record on file?**

    As for any HNS claim, pharmacies must keep a record of the required documentation. All pharmacy documentation records relating to the administration of the COVID-19 vaccine claim (and epinephrine auto-injector, if applicable) are part of the patient's medication record and must be maintained in a readily retrievable format for the appropriate record retention period of at least 10 years from the last

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recorded professional pharmacy service provided to the patient, or until 10 years after the day on which the patient reached, or would have reached, the age of 18 years, whichever is longer. Such records must also be maintained for the same period of time for the purposes of post-payment verification.

In addition, pharmacists are expected to review and adhere to the Ontario College of Pharmacists Record Retention, Disclosure and Disposal Guidelines.

**25. What will happen if I forget to document or misplace the documentation?**

If there is no documentation, incorrect or incomplete documentation, the administration fee that is claimed may be subject to recovery by the ministry. Documentation is also important in the event of an adverse reaction following an immunization or if a patient follows up with the pharmacy for their COVID-19 vaccine record.

**26. What documentation must pharmacists provide to the patient after administration of the COVID-19 vaccine?**

To help patients keep track of their COVID-19 vaccine, pharmacists must provide a written record (i.e., electronic or paper based) of the COVID-19 immunization product administered, including the date and name of the pharmacy.

Patients should keep this record in a safe place, and it should also be readily available on file at the pharmacy.

Pharmacies should also inform patients of any potential adverse effects they may experience following the vaccination and when to contact their health care provider.

For more information on forms and resource materials pharmacies should contact their head office or the Ontario Pharmacists Association.

**27. What documentation does the ministry require for an epinephrine auto-injector claims submission?**

The HNS claim for the epinephrine auto-injector will follow the claim for the COVID-19 vaccine. Documentation to support the claim includes:

- Name, pharmacy address and signature of the pharmacist who administered the epinephrine auto-injector.
- Name, strength/dose (where applicable) and quantity of the epinephrine auto-injector administered.

- Name and address of the patient.

- Time and date the epinephrine auto-injector was administered.

- Cross-reference with the claim for the publicly funded COVID-19 vaccine administered to the same patient.

Pharmacies must keep a record when the epinephrine auto-injector was administered for emergency use due to a pharmacist-administered COVID-19 vaccine.

# Claim for payment through the Health Network System

28. **When should the pharmacist submit the claim for payment for administration of the publicly funded COVID-19 vaccine?**

Date of service for the claim submitted to the HNS <u>must</u> reflect the date the publicly funded COVID-19 vaccine was administered[3].

Registered pharmacy students, interns and pharmacy technicians that have valid injection training may administer the COVID-19 vaccine; however, the respective injection-trained supervising pharmacist must submit the claim for payment through the HNS using their Pharmacist ID.

**Note:** When entering information in the Provincial COVID-19 Vaccine Solution-COVAX$_{ON,}$ immunizers **must** identify their individual health professional status (i.e., they must use their own User ID).

29. **How are claims for COVID-19 vaccine submitted through the HNS?**

**Claims submission requirements for Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB)-eligible recipients and Non-ODB recipients are as follows:**

**For ODB-eligible recipients**

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[3] Note that the HNS can process online transactions for publicly funded services on any the most recent seven calendar days, including the current date. This means that a claim for the COVID-19 vaccine could be submitted today for a service date in the past (as long as it is within the past 7 days).

The claim submission follows the usual process (See [Section 5](#) of the Ontario Drug Program Reference Manual)  for submitting claims on the HNS with the following additional information:

- Intervention code 'PS': (Professional Care Services)
- Drug Identification Number (DIN): as per the publicly funded COVID-19 vaccine administered
- Valid Pharmacist ID

**For Non-ODB recipients**

When submitting a claim for a person who does not have ODB coverage, pharmacists must submit the following information:

- Patient Gender: 'F' = female; 'M' = male
- Patient Date of Birth: Valid YYYYMMDD
- Patient's Ontario Health Card number*
- Intervention codes:
  - PS: Professional Care Services
  - ML: Established eligibility coverage (i.e., 1 day of the Plan 'S' coverage)
- Carrier ID: 'S'
- Drug Identification Number (DIN): as per the publicly funded COVID-19 vaccine administered
- Valid Pharmacist ID

**\*For patients without an Ontario health number**

When submitting a claim for any eligible person who does not have an Ontario health number, pharmacists must submit the following information:

- First Name: Patient's first name
- Last Name: Patient's last name
- Patient Gender: 'F' = female; 'M' = male
- Patient Date of Birth: Valid YYYYMMDD

- Proxy patient ID: 79999 999 93
- Intervention codes:
    - PS: Professional Care Services
    - PB: Name entered is consistent with card
- Valid Pharmacist ID

Pharmacist must ensure that the patient's date of birth, Ontario health number / proxy health number and name (as it appears on the health card / document) are entered as part of the HNS claims submission. Failure to do so may impact the ability to submit future claims for these patients. In addition, by identifying the date of birth, pharmacists can align the appropriate vaccine to the patient's age group.

30. **When submitting the claim for the epinephrine auto-injector due to an adverse reaction from the COVID-19 injection, I notice the payment appears in the "dispensing fee" field – is that correct?**

   Yes, the payment appears in the "dispensing fee" field of the claims submission.

# Adverse Drug Reactions

31. **What are the reporting requirements for an adverse event following immunizations?**

   All adverse events following immunization must be reported to the local Medical Officer of Health within seven business days, per section 38 of the *Health Protection and Promotion Act.*

   Written record of any adverse events following immunization (AEFIs) that may or may not result in the administration of epinephrine, and the circumstances relating to the administration of the substance should be reported using the Ontario Adverse Events Following Immunization Reporting Form and sent to the local public health unit[4].

   In addition, it is mandatory for pharmacies to document the adverse event due to the vaccine administration in the Provincial COVID-19 Vaccine Solution-COVAX$_{ON}$.

   For additional information, please contact your local public health unit. Refer to the ministry website for a list of Ontario public health units.

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[4] For complete reporting requirements, please refer to the pharmacy's *COVID-19 Vaccine Agreement* for adverse events. For additional information, please contact your local public health unit. Refer to the ministry website for a list of Ontario public health units.

32. **If a patient has an adverse reaction to the COVID-19 vaccine, who is responsible for administering the epinephrine auto-injector?**

Should the adverse reaction occur after the administration of the COVID-19 vaccine, the pharmacist who administered the COVID-19 vaccine or who is overseeing the registered pharmacy student, intern or pharmacy technician should administer the epinephrine auto-injector.

Under the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991,* the administration of a substance by injection is a controlled act which unauthorized persons are prohibited from performing.

Where the administration of a substance by injection is done for the purposes of rendering first aid or temporary assistance in an emergency, individuals are exempted from the prohibition of performing this activity. However, it is advisable to speak with the Ontario College of Pharmacists if you have any additional questions about your responsibilities and/or accountabilities in this regard.

For claims submission purposes, the ministry requires the patient's Ontario health number (or proxy health number ID) and pharmacist identification for the use of an epinephrine auto-injector after an adverse reaction to the administered COVID-19 vaccine.

# Restrictions

33. **Can pharmacy immunizers provide the publicly funded COVID-19 vaccine to residents of long-term care homes or hospital in-patients?**

No. Pharmacy staff administration of the publicly funded COVID-19 vaccine to long-term care home residents or hospital in-patients is **not** eligible for payment under this initiative.

34. **Can pharmacists submit claims for COVID-19 vaccine administration manually to the ministry, using a paper claim?**

No. The ministry does not accept paper claims for the publicly funded COVID-19 vaccine. All claims must be submitted electronically using the HNS.

35. **Can pharmacists submit a claim for the epinephrine auto-injector when it is provided to the patient to take home after the COVID-19 vaccine was administered?**

No. Claims submitted for epinephrine auto-injector that are associated with the publicly funded COVID-19 vaccine emergency use are *only* reimbursed when the injection is given by the pharmacist as emergency first aid or temporary assistance as needed in the pharmacy right after administering the COVID-19 vaccine to a patient.

36. **Can pharmacists submit a claim for epinephrine auto-injector for a patient without a valid Ontario health card number?**

Yes. Pharmacists may submit claims for payment using the ministry's HNS for epinephrine auto-injectors administered to individuals without a valid Ontario health card number for emergency use after administering the COVID-19 vaccine by using the proxy health number ID.

37. **If the pharmacist recommends to a physician that a patient should get their COVID-19 vaccine, is the recommendation billable under the Pharmaceutical Opinion Program?**

No. All eligible individuals are encouraged to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. In addition, because its administration is within the pharmacist's scope of practice (when administered in accordance with this initiative) and requires no permission from a primary care provider, such a recommendation does not meet the criteria of the Pharmaceutical Opinion Program.

**Additional Information:**

**For pharmacy billing**:

Please call ODB Pharmacy Help Desk at: 1-800-668-6641

**For Support for Provincial COVID-19 Vaccine Solution-COVAX$_{ON}$**

Please contact your pharmacy head office or the [Ontario Pharmacists Association](#)

**For COVID-19 vaccine rollout in pharmacy:**

Please email the ministry at: OPDPInfoBox@ontario.ca

**For all other Health Care Providers and the Public:**

Please call ServiceOntario, Infoline at 1-866-532-3161 TTY 1-800-387-5559. In Toronto, TTY 416-327-4282.