

Ministry of Health

# COVID-19 Vaccine Information Sheet (age 12+)

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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.

**Please read this information sheet carefully and make sure all your questions have been answered by a health care provider before you get the vaccine.**

## How do the COVID-19 vaccines work?

- The vaccines teach your immune system how to recognize and fight against the COVID-19 virus, which helps to prevent illness if you come into contact with the virus.
- The COVID-19 vaccine is given as a needle in the upper arm muscle.
- The vaccine does not contain a live virus. You cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine.
- All COVID-19 vaccines authorized for use in Canada are very safe and effective and significantly help in preventing infection, illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19.

## Which vaccine am I getting?

- The [Pfizer-BioNTech](#), [Moderna](#), [AstraZeneca](#) and [Janssen \(Johnson & Johnson\)](#) vaccines are all authorized for use in Canada.
- You will be offered an mRNA vaccine (Pfizer and Moderna)
  - If you are age 12-29, getting the Pfizer vaccine is preferentially recommended. Although very rare, mRNA vaccines (Pfizer, Moderna) have been linked to myocarditis (inflammation of the heart) and pericarditis (inflammation of the lining of the heart) with fewer reports of myocarditis/pericarditis after the Pfizer vaccine. For most people, the heart inflammation is mild and goes away within days.
- Mixing vaccine types and brands is safe and works well.

- It is important that you receive all recommended doses of the vaccine to get long-term protection against COVID-19. You are recommended to receive your first and second doses 8 weeks apart for optimal, longest lasting protection. This interval may be associated with a lower risk of myocarditis and/or pericarditis
  - Individuals may be recommended to get an additional dose of the COVID-19 vaccine because of their immune system response or because they are more vulnerable to COVID-19. See the [COVID-19 Vaccine Third Dose Recommendations](#) for more information.
- It is safe to get your flu shot or a different vaccine at the same time as your COVID-19 vaccine. A 14-day wait period before or after your COVID-19 vaccine is not required.

### What are the ingredients in the vaccines?

- The vaccine contains lipids (fats), salts, sugars and buffers. COVID-19 vaccines **do not** contain eggs, gelatin (pork), gluten, latex, preservatives, antibiotics, adjuvants or aluminum.
- The vaccines are safe, even if you have food, drug, or environmental allergies.
- Talk to a health care provider first before getting a vaccine if you have allergies to the following vaccine ingredients: polyethylene glycol (PEG), polysorbate 80 and/or tromethamine (trometamol or Tris).
- Serious allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) to the vaccine are rare and can be treated. Get medical help if you have trouble breathing or develop hives or swelling in the face and throat after being vaccinated.

### Before receiving the vaccine, tell the health care provider at the clinic who is providing the vaccine if:

- You are currently feeling sick or have [signs and symptoms](#) of COVID-19.
  - You should wait until your symptoms go away before getting vaccinated. If you have been told to self-isolate because of COVID-19 you should also wait.
- You have been deemed a close contact of a COVID-19 positive case.

- You should not attend a vaccine clinic and should wait until your isolation period is over to get your vaccine.
- You were diagnosed with myocarditis or pericarditis following a previous dose of a COVID-19 vaccine or have had myocarditis before.
  - You may need to speak with your healthcare provider before getting the vaccine.
- You have allergies or had an allergic reaction to a previous COVID-19 vaccine dose or another vaccine.
- You are immunosuppressed due to disease or treatment.
- You have ever fainted or became dizzy after getting a vaccine or medical procedure or you have a fear of needles.
- You have a bleeding disorder or are taking medication that could affect blood clotting.

**For the AstraZeneca or [Janssen \(Johnson & Johnson\)](#) vaccine only**, if you have previously experienced any of the following, you cannot get either vaccine: major venous and/or arterial thrombosis (blood clot) with thrombocytopenia (low platelets), cerebral venous sinus thrombosis with thrombocytopenia (CSVT), heparin-induced thrombocytopenia (HIT), or capillary leak syndrome. These are very rare side effects of these two vaccines.

It is safe for pregnant and breastfeeding individuals to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. For more detailed information regarding allergies, immunocompromised, pregnant or breastfeeding individuals, see the [Special Populations](#) document.

### **What are the normal side effects to expect after receiving the vaccine?**

Some mild side effects may occur after getting the COVID-19 vaccine, such as pain and swelling where the vaccine was given, tiredness, muscle or joint soreness, headache or mild fever. These side effects are normal signs that the body is building protection. Serious side effects after receiving the vaccine are extremely rare.

### **If I am feeling unwell after my vaccine, when should I call a health care provider?**

If you experience a high fever (over 40°C or 104°F), or 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 you have serious drowsiness, seizures/convulsions, hives, swelling of the

face, throat or mouth, trouble breathing or other serious symptoms (e.g., “pins and needles” or numbness).

If you received the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, please **seek medical attention** if you have any of these symptoms after receiving the vaccine: chest pain, shortness of breath, heart palpitations (pounding or racing heart) or an abnormal heart beat. These may be symptoms of myocarditis or pericarditis, which are a very rare and treatable side effect from the vaccine.

If you received the AstraZeneca or Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) vaccine and you develop any of these symptoms within 42 days, please **seek medical attention**: shortness of breath, chest pain, limb swelling/redness/coldness or pain, persistent back or abdominal pain, unusual bleeding, skin bruising (other than where the vaccine was given) or red/purple spots under the skin, new severe headaches, persistent or worsening headaches, blurred or doubled vision, difficulty speaking or moving, numbness or “pins and needles.”

#### **If I have questions, who should I ask?**

If you have any questions, please speak with a health care provider or the person providing the vaccine. You can also contact your [local public health unit](#) to ask questions or to report an adverse reaction following vaccination.