

Ministry of Health

COVID-19 What you need to know before your COVID-19 vaccine appointment

Version 2.0 December 30, 2020 (amended January 7, 2021)

Highlights of changes

- Updated to include Moderna vaccine
- Updated with direction for assistive devices (page 2)
- Further information for special populations including individuals with allergies (page 5)

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This guidance provides basic information only. It is not intended to take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, legal advice or legal requirements.

In the event of any conflict between this guidance 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.

- Please check the Ministry of Health (MOH) [COVID-19 website](#) regularly for updates to this document, list of symptoms, other guidance documents, Directives and other information.

You have been identified to be eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Please read below to know what to expect for upcoming appointment to receive your vaccine.

What do I need to bring to my appointment?

- Your health (OHIP) card.
 - If you do not have an OHIP card, bring another form of a government issued-photo ID such as a driver's license, passport, Status Card or other provincial health cards.
- Immunization record to keep track of this and other vaccines
- Assistive devices as needed (e.g. scooter, wheelchair, cane)
- Reading glasses and/or hearing aid if required
- Your mask
- A support person if required (e.g. interpreter)

What do I need to do to prepare for my appointment?

- Take your regular medication and eat your meals as usual.
- Do not wear any scented products.
- Wear a loose-fitting top or a t-shirt so that the health care provider can easily access your arm for the vaccination
- **If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should not attend the clinic. Call the clinic and follow their instructions.**
- Do not arrive more than 10 minutes before your appointment.

What can I expect when I arrive to my appointment?

Vaccination clinics will take every precaution to ensure your health and safety during your visit. Public health measures will be implemented, and all health care providers, patients, and other staff and visitors will be expected to follow all public health measures in the clinic. Be sure to read and follow any signs or instructions provided at the clinic.

You will be asked to provide your OHIP or Status card (or any government issued-photo ID if no OHIP card) to confirm your appointment.

You will be asked to complete active screening to see if you have signs or symptoms associated with COVID-19 prior to entry into the clinic.

You will be asked to wear a mask while at the clinic, as well as to clean your hands, and practice physical distancing from others (at least 2 metres).

You will be asked to stay for 15-30 minutes after you receive the vaccine to monitor for any adverse events following immunization.

What you need to know about the COVID-19 Vaccine

What is this vaccine?

- Health Canada has authorized two vaccines to protect individuals against the COVID-19 virus:

- Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine was authorized for use in Canada on December 9, 2020.
- Moderna COVID-19 vaccine was authorized for use in Canada on December 23, 2020

Who can get the vaccine

COVID-19 vaccines are authorized in individuals 16 years of age and older (Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine) and in individuals 18 years of age and older (Moderna COVID-19 vaccine).

These vaccines **should not** be administered to:

- Individuals who have ever had a **severe allergic reaction** (i.e. anaphylaxis) to a previous dose of an mRNA vaccine or to any of its components (including polyethylene glycol, see below) or its container, **should not get either mRNA COVID-19 vaccine**.
 - Consult [the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine monograph for further ingredient details](#)
 - Consult [the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine monograph for further ingredient details](#)
 - It is important to review the ingredients carefully as some people may be allergic to these ingredients, including **polyethylene glycol**. Polyethylene glycol can rarely cause allergic reactions and is found in some 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 foods or drinks. Due to potential cross-reactive hypersensitivity with the vaccine ingredient polyethylene glycol, those with a suspected hypersensitivity or who have had an immediate allergic reaction to **polysorbate** should speak to their health care provider before vaccination.
- Anyone who has symptoms that could be due to COVID-19; these patients should get a COVID-19 test.
- Acutely ill individuals; As a precautionary measure
- Individuals who have received another vaccine (not a COVID-19 vaccine) in the past 14 days.

Considerations for other patient groups

Guidance for special populations, including for example breastfeeding or pregnant individuals, individuals with allergies, 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, including if additional documentation is required for vaccination.

The COVID-19 vaccine is not currently being offered to the following groups who were excluded from the clinical trials until further evidence is available. More data may be available in the near future:

- **Children.** Clinical trials to determine safety and effectiveness of the vaccine in children are forthcoming.

Precautions during vaccination should be taken for:

- Patients who have a bleeding problem, bruise easily or use a blood-thinning medicine should receive the vaccine. Individuals receiving long-term anticoagulation with either warfarin or heparin are not considered to be at higher risk of bleeding complications following immunization and may be safely immunized through the IM route as recommended, without discontinuation of their anticoagulation therapy.
- Individuals with a history of severe allergic reactions (i.e. anaphylaxis) not related to vaccines or injectable medications—such as allergies to food, pet, venom, environmental, or latex, etc. **should be offered** the COVID-19 vaccines.
 - An extended period of observation post-vaccination of 30 minutes is recommended for these groups
 - For more detailed recommendations on people with allergies, please consult [Vaccination Recommendations for Special Populations](#) guidance document

How many doses of the vaccine do I need?

All individuals need 2 doses of the vaccine. You must get the same vaccine for your first and second dose.

- Those receiving the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine will need their second dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine 21 days after their first dose.
- Those receiving the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine will need their second dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine 28 days after their first dose.

How is the vaccine given?

The vaccine will be administered through an intramuscular injection into the upper arm (into the deltoid muscle).

Are there any side effects associated with the vaccine?

Like all medicines and other vaccines, COVID-19 vaccines can cause side effects. Those observed during the clinical trials were commonly reported side effects of vaccines and do not pose a risk to health.

- The most frequent adverse reactions were usually mild or moderate in intensity and resolved within a few days after vaccination.
- No major safety concerns were reported in the data submitted to Health Canada.

You should monitor for potential side effects (see below) after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine.

- Pain at injection site, redness, swelling
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Muscle pain or joint pain
- Chills
- Fever
- Swollen glands
- Diarrhea
- Nausea/ vomiting
- Enlarged lymph nodes (swollen glands) in your underarm

You will receive a note from the clinic at the time of your vaccination called the After Care Sheet that tells you what to expect after vaccination.