

Ministry of Health

COVID-19 Vaccine Information Sheet: For Youth (age 12-17)

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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.

To date, 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](#), [COVISHIELD COVID-19 vaccine](#), and [Janssen COVID-19 vaccine](#). Currently, the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is the only COVID-19 vaccine authorized by Health Canada for children aged 12 and up.

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 all vaccines to make sure they are safe and effective.

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.

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.

Children who get infected with COVID-19 typically experience mild symptoms. However, some children can get very sick requiring hospitalization. Children can also get a serious medical condition called "Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children." Others can experience more serious, longer-lasting symptoms that can

affect their health and well-being. In very rare cases, the virus can also cause death in children. Like adults, children also can transmit the virus to others if they are infected, even if they don't feel sick.

How do the 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 its own natural protection. This natural protection then helps to prevent future illness if you come into contact with the COVID-19 virus in the future. **You cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine.**

All COVID-19 vaccines authorized for use in Canada are effective at protecting against symptomatic, lab-confirmed disease.

- It is important that you receive **both doses** of the vaccine. Long-term protection against COVID-19 is not achieved until after the second dose of vaccine is received for two dose vaccines.

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine has been demonstrated to be safe and highly effective at protecting against COVID-19 for individuals 12 and over. The Pfizer-BioNTech clinical trial studied 2,260 youth aged 12 to 15 years old in the United States. In the trial, there were 18 cases of COVID-19 in the group that did not get the vaccine (the "placebo" group) compared to zero cases in the vaccinated group. Based on these results, the vaccine was calculated to be 100% effective in the trial.

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.

- The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is currently authorized for individuals 12 years of age and older.

At the vaccination clinic, you will be counselled on the benefits and risks of the vaccine you are receiving prior to receiving the vaccine.

Before receiving the vaccine, tell the health care provider at the clinic who is helping you if:

- You are currently feeling unwell or have signs and symptoms of COVID-19.
- You have had a previous allergic reaction to any other vaccine, a COVID-19 vaccine (if this is your 2nd dose) or any ingredients in the COVID-19 vaccines which are listed below in this document.
- You were diagnosed with myocarditis or pericarditis following the first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.
- You have any allergies or allergic conditions to anything.
- You are or could be pregnant or are breastfeeding. You can still get your vaccine if you are pregnant or are breastfeeding.
- You are immunosuppressed due to disease or treatment or have been diagnosed with an autoimmune condition.
- You have ever fainted or became dizzy after receiving a vaccine or a medical procedure, or you have a fear of needles. The healthcare provider may offer supports to assist you to make the experience safer and more comfortable for you.
- 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 at the time of vaccination.
- You have received any other vaccine (not COVID-19 vaccine) in the past 14 days.

The [Vaccination Recommendations for Special Populations](#) guidance document provides additional information for people who are breastfeeding or pregnant, have allergies, autoimmune conditions, or are immunocompromised due to disease or treatment, as well as for adolescents at very high risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19. The [Vaccination in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding Decision-Making Support Tool](#) can help make an informed decision about COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

If you have questions about whether the vaccine is right for you based on your medical condition, talk to the health care provider who provides care to you like a specialist, your paediatrician or family doctor.

What are the ingredients in the vaccines?

Ingredients		Pfizer-BioNTech
Medical		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mRNA
Non-medical	Lipids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ALC-0315 ALC-0159 – a polyethylene glycol (PEG) 1,2-Distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine (DSPC) Cholesterol
	Salts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dibasic sodium phosphate dihydrate Monobasic potassium phosphate Potassium chloride Sodium chloride
	Sugar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sucrose Water for injection

COVID-19 vaccines **do not** contain eggs, gelatin (pork), gluten, latex, preservatives, antibiotics or aluminum.

Who should wait to get their COVID-19 vaccine?

- People who have received another vaccine (not a COVID-19 vaccine) in the previous 14 days.
- People with symptoms of an acute illness (e.g., runny nose, sore throat, cough, fever, chills, diarrhea, nausea/vomiting); they should wait until symptoms have completely resolved/gotten better in order to avoid confusing any complications resulting from the illness to a vaccine-related side effect.
- People with [symptoms of COVID-19](#) – they should self-isolate, and be encouraged to get tested.
- Anyone who has been advised to self-isolate because of COVID-19 by public health or another health provider.
- As a precautionary measure, people who were diagnosed with myocarditis/pericarditis after a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine should wait to receive a second dose until more information is available. The National Advisory

Committee on Immunization, Public Health Ontario and The Ministry of Health continue to follow this closely and will update this recommendation as more evidence becomes available.

How is the vaccine administered?

- The COVID-19 vaccine is given as a needle in the upper arm (into the deltoid muscle).

What are the side effects of the vaccine?

COVID-19 vaccines, like all vaccines, may cause side effects, although not everyone experiences them. Those who do experience them, mostly report mild side effects within the first 1-2 days after vaccination. The most commonly reported side effects after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine are localized reactions including pain, swelling, and colour changes in the skin (e.g. red, purple) at the injection site, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, joint pain, chills, and mild fever.

Ongoing studies on the 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 health care provider administering the second dose if you had any side effects after the first dose.**

There have been Canadian and international reports of myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle) and pericarditis (inflammation of the sac in which the heart sits inside of the chest) following vaccination with COVID-19 mRNA vaccines. Cases have occurred more frequently in males than in females, most frequently in adolescents and young adults under the age of 30 more commonly after the second dose of vaccine. The majority of reported cases have been mild with individuals recovering quickly. Symptoms have typically been reported to start within one week after vaccination. **The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) continues to strongly recommend that a complete series with an mRNA COVID-19 vaccines be offered** to all eligible individuals in Canada,

including those 12 years of age and older. mRNA vaccines continue to be recommended internationally. As a precautionary measure, NACI is recommending that individuals who experienced myocarditis/pericarditis after a first dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine should wait to receive a second dose until more information is available. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization, Public Health Ontario and The Ministry of Health continue to follow this closely and will update this recommendation as more evidence becomes available. This situation is being monitored closely in Canada and internationally.

If I am feeling unwell after my vaccine, 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, talk to your parents or caregivers and contact your health care provider. 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
- serious drowsiness
- high fever (over 40°C)
- convulsions or seizures
- other serious symptoms (e.g., “pins and needles” or numbness)

Please seek medical attention if you develop any of the following symptoms after receiving the vaccine:

- chest pain
- shortness of breath
- palpitations (pounding or racing heart) or feeling of a rapid or abnormal heart rhythm

You can also contact your [local public health unit](#) to ask questions.

When should I return for my second dose?

If this is your first dose of the vaccine, be sure to return for your second dose as instructed by the vaccination clinic or the health care provider who provided you with your first dose. It is important that you receive two doses of the vaccine as protection against COVID-19 is not optimal 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. If you are in school, your principal or other school staff may also be able to help answer questions for you.