

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](#), [Janssen \(Johnson & Johnson\)](#), and [Novavax Nuvaxovid](#) vaccines are all authorized for use in Canada. An mRNA vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna) continues to be preferentially recommended due to their excellent protection against severe illness and hospitalization, and their well-known safety profiles. 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 a few days with rest and treatment.

- The Novavax Nuvaxovid vaccine COVID-19 vaccine is authorized for people who are 18 years of age and older. This vaccine may be offered to people who are not able or willing to receive an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine.
- See the [viral vector vaccine information sheet](#) for information on AstraZeneca and Janssen COVID-19 vaccines.
- It is important that you receive all [recommended doses](#) (including booster doses) of the vaccine to stay up to date and to build 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.
- It is safe to get your flu shot or a different vaccine at the same time as your COVID-19 vaccine. A 14-day waiting 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, 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, or have been instructed to self-isolate.
  - You should wait until your symptoms go away, and your isolation period is over, before getting vaccinated.
- 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.

You have previously experienced a serious side effect following a COVID-19 vaccination that you sought medical care for (e.g., Guillain-Barré Syndrome, vaccine induced immune thrombotic thrombocytopenia). 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 is the recommended interval to receive vaccine after having COVID-19?**

It is recommended that you receive the COVID-19 vaccine, even after a previous infection with SARS-CoV-2. If you had COVID-19 before receiving your first or second COVID-19 vaccine dose, it is suggested you receive your first/second dose 8 weeks after symptom onset or positive test (if asymptomatic). If you are moderately to severely immunocompromised, it is suggested the vaccine be offered 4-8 weeks after symptom onset or positive test (if asymptomatic). If you have a history of MIS-C, it is suggested to wait at least 90 days after recovery or onset of MIS-C (whichever is longer).

Individuals 12 years of age and older, infected with COVID-19 after their primary series but before their booster dose, are recommended to receive their booster dose 3 months (84 days) after symptom onset or positive test (if asymptomatic) and, for 12 to 17 year olds, provided it is at least 6 months (168 days) from completing the primary series.

These intervals are a guide and clinical discretion, including a risk/benefit discussion with your health-care provider, may be considered. You may also receive a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as you are asymptomatic and have completed your

isolation after being sick with COVID-19. However, longer intervals between infection and vaccination, as recommended above, may result in a better immune response.

\*A previous infection with SARS-CoV-2 is defined as a COVID-19 case confirmed by a molecular (e.g., PCR) or rapid antigen test; or [symptomatic](#) AND a household contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case.

### **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 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.