

Ministry of Health

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

Version 1.0 March 11, 2021

Note: This document is an updated combination of documents previously titled “What you need to know before your COVID-19 vaccine appointment” and “Vaccine After Care Sheet”.

This guidance provides basic information only. This document is not intended to provide or take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, or legal advice. In the event of any conflict between this 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.

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

Preparing for COVID-19 Vaccination

What do I need to bring to my appointment?

- Your health card/Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) card.
 - If you do not have an OHIP card, bring another form of government-issued photo identification such as a driver’s license, passport, Status Card, or other provincial health cards.
- Your immunization record to keep track of your COVID-19 vaccine.
- Assistive devices (e.g., scooter, wheelchair, cane) and coping items (e.g., cell phone, book).
- Reading glasses and/or hearing aid, if required
- Your mask

- A support person, if required (e.g., interpreter, someone to help you cope during the vaccination).

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

- Read the [Vaccine Information Sheet](#) and follow up with your health care provider if you have any questions about your medical history or allergies.
- Take your regular medication and eat your meals as usual. Make sure you have something to eat before coming to the clinic to prevent feeling faint while being vaccinated.
- Wear a loose-fitting top or a t-shirt so that the health care provider can easily access your upper arm for the vaccination.
- Do not wear any scented products.
- **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 to avoid crowding at the clinic.

What can I expect when I arrive at my appointment?

Health care providers are being very careful to prevent the spread of COVID-19 when providing immunizations. Vaccination clinics will take every precaution to ensure your health and safety during your visit. Public health measures will be implemented (e.g. physical distancing, hand sanitization, mask-wearing). All health care providers, patients, other staff, and visitors need to follow all public health measures in the clinic. 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 answer a series of questions to see if you have signs or symptoms associated with COVID-19 before entering the clinic.
- You will be asked questions about your medical history (for example about any allergies you have)
- You will be asked to wear a mask while at the clinic, to clean your hands, and practice physical distancing from others (at least 2 metres/6 feet).

- You will be asked to stay for 15-30 minutes after you receive the vaccine to monitor for any unexpected changes in your health or allergic reactions.

COVID-19 Vaccination

What is this vaccine?

- All vaccines work by presenting our body with something that looks like the infection so that our immune system can learn how to produce natural protection. This natural protection then helps to keep us from becoming sick if we come into contact with the real virus in the future.
- Health Canada has authorized the following 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
 - [AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine](#) and [COVISHIELD COVID-19 vaccine](#) were authorized for use in Canada on February 26, 2021

Who can get the vaccine?

Ontario's vaccine supply will not arrive all at the same time, therefore, the government has created a distribution plan outlining priority groups (you can read more about the [plan online](#)). A complete vaccine series for the existing vaccines which have been approved by Health Canada require two doses and will be offered to individuals without contraindications to the vaccine and in the currently identified priority groups.

- The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is offered to individuals 16 years of age and older.
- The Moderna COVID-19 vaccine is offered to individuals 18 years and older.
- AstraZeneca and COVISHIELD COVID-19 vaccines are offered to individuals 18-64 years of age.

What if I have allergies?

The health care provider at the vaccine clinic will ask about allergies. Check the [COVID-19 Vaccine Information Sheet](#) for more details on the vaccine ingredients, including polyethylene glycol, tromethamine and polysorbate.

- COVID-19 vaccine is contraindicated in individuals who are hypersensitive to the active substances or to any ingredient in the formulation. If you have had an allergic reaction (including a severe reaction like anaphylaxis) to a previous dose of a COVID-19 vaccine or any of the components, you will need to consult with an allergist/immunologist before getting vaccinated to see if the vaccine can be given safely.
- You can receive the COVID-19 vaccines and will be asked to wait in the clinic for 30 minutes if:
 - You have had an allergic reaction and/or anaphylaxis that occurred with a vaccine or injectable medication that does not contain a component or cross-reacting component of the COVID-19 vaccines
 - You have a history of significant allergic reactions and/or anaphylaxis, to any food, drug, venom, latex or other allergens not related to the COVID-19 vaccines
- If you have allergy issues like runny noses, sneezing, itchy nose and eyes, asthma and eczema you can receive the vaccine. You will be asked to wait at the clinic for 15-30 minutes after your vaccine

For more detailed recommendations for individuals with allergies, please consult [Vaccination Recommendations for Special Populations](#) guidance document

What if I have other medical conditions?

If you are pregnant, breastfeeding, have an autoimmune condition, or are immunocompromised due to disease or treatment, you may need to speak with your health care provider prior to immunization. Please consult the [Vaccination Recommendations for Special Populations](#) guidance document for further information. You should speak to your health care provider about whether the vaccine is right for you based on your medical condition.

What if I take blood thinners?

If you have a bleeding problem, bruise easily, or use a blood-thinning medicine (e.g. warfarin or heparin) you should receive the vaccine.

What if I fainted the last time I got a vaccine or I have a fear of needles?

If you have fainted, or became dizzy with previous vaccinations or procedures, or if you have a high level of fear about injections, you should still get the vaccine. Tell the health care provider at the clinic so that appropriate supports can be offered.

How many doses of the vaccine do I need?

You need 2 doses of the vaccine. You must get the same vaccine for your first and second dose. Refer to the [Vaccine Information Sheet](#) for timing of the two doses.

How is the vaccine given?

The vaccine will be given through an injection into the muscle of your upper arm (deltoid muscle).

Are there any side effects associated with the vaccine?

- Like all medicines and other vaccines, COVID-19 vaccines can cause side effects. The most frequent side effects were similar to those from other vaccines, usually mild or moderate in intensity and resolved within a few days after vaccination. Refer to the [Vaccine Information Sheet](#) for more information.
- No major safety concerns were reported in the data submitted to Health Canada.
- The most common potential side effect of vaccination is some pain during the injection. You can buy topical anesthetics that can help reduce immunization pain at your pharmacy without a prescription (these will need to be applied before your appointment). Talk to your health care provider or pharmacist for more information. You can also reduce pain by using strategies such as distraction and calming techniques. Consider what strategies will work for you and let the health care provider know.

- Though uncommon, allergic reactions can occur after vaccination. The clinic staff are prepared to manage these events should they occur.

COVID-19 Vaccination After Care

What should I do right after receiving the vaccine?

- After your vaccine, you should stay in the clinic for 15 to 30 minutes. This is to make sure you do not have an allergic reaction. Allergic reactions do not happen often. Staff giving vaccines know how to treat allergic reactions. Let staff know if you notice a skin rash, swelling of your face or mouth, problems breathing, and/or feel unwell.
- If waiting inside the clinic, be sure to leave your mask on and remain at least 2 metres away from others.
- Use the alcohol-based hand rub to clean your hands before leaving the clinic.
- Do not operate a vehicle or other form of transportation for at least 15 to 30 minutes after being vaccinated (as advised by the health care provider) or if you are feeling unwell.
- If someone is picking you up from the clinic, they should get you after the 15 minute waiting period in the clinic is finished. Your support person or driver should follow the direction of clinic staff to collect you.

What should I expect in the next few days?

- You may have side effects from the vaccine. They should go away in a few days.
- Common expected side effects include: pain, redness or swelling where the needle was given. A cool, damp cloth where the vaccine was given may help with soreness.
- Other symptoms may include: tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain, and fever. If needed, pain or fever medication (such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen) may help with pain or fever.
- Serious side effects after receiving the vaccine are rare. However, should you develop any of the following adverse reactions within three days of receiving the vaccine, seek medical attention right away or call 911 if you are severely unwell:
 - hives
 - swelling of the face or mouth
 - trouble breathing

- very pale colour and serious drowsiness
- high fever (over 40°C)
- convulsions or seizures
- other serious symptoms (e.g., “pins and needles” or numbness).
- If you are concerned about any reactions you experience after receiving the vaccine, contact your healthcare provider. You can also contact your [local public health unit](#) to ask questions or to report an adverse reaction.
- If you still need to receive your second dose, tell the person providing the second dose about any side effects you experienced following the first dose.

Things to remember after you receive the vaccine

- **Continue wearing a mask, staying at least 2 metres from others and limiting/avoiding contact with others outside your household.**
- Do not receive any other vaccines from now until at least 28 days after the second dose of your COVID-19 vaccine (unless considered necessary by your health care provider).
- If you are planning to become pregnant, you should speak to your primary care provider.
- Keep this sheet (or other immunization record) AND your printed COVID-19 Immunization receipt from the vaccination today in a safe place. Bring the COVID Immunization receipt (and other immunization record if you wish) with you for your second dose of vaccine.

When should I return for my second dose?

If this is your first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, be sure to return for your second dose as instructed by the vaccination clinic. **You should book an appointment to receive the next dose right away.** It is important that you receive two doses of the vaccine as protection against COVID-19 is not complete 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.**

Appointment Date and Time for Second Dose:
