

Important Updates on COVID-19, Influenza and RSV Vaccines

Update to York Region health care professionals as of September 15, 2023

XBB.1.5-containing mRNA Vaccine

On September 12, 2023, Health Canada authorized Moderna's updated XBB.1.5-containing mRNA vaccine for use in individuals aged 6 months and older. The updated monovalent vaccine targets the Omicron subvariant XBB.1.5, which preliminary clinical data shows matches the current circulating Omicron subvariants including EG.5.1 and BA.2.86. The new vaccine is authorized for use as a primary series and booster doses for people aged 6 months of age and older. Updated [guidance](#) is expected soon from the Ministry of Health with details for administration in Ontario. This is the first time a COVID-19 booster dose has been authorized for individuals aged 6 months to less than 5 years. The recommended interval will be six months after the last COVID-19 vaccination or confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection.

The new formulation of the vaccine is expected to be available for higher-risk individuals (see higher-risk list below) in early October and then eligibility will open to the general public in late October.

For more information, please see [NACI's updated guidance](#) on the use of COVID-19 vaccines in the fall of 2023.

There are also two other updated COVID-19 vaccines (from Pfizer and Novavax) currently under review by Health Canada. We will update you as soon as we receive information on the approval and availability of these two vaccines.

In early July 2023, the Ministry of Health recommended that individuals delay receiving an additional COVID-19 booster dose until fall 2023 to maximize protection against COVID-19 outcomes during the fall-winter respiratory season. Individuals who are due for a COVID-19 vaccine (i.e., it has been more than six months since their last dose or confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection) have been advised to assess their individual risk about the timing of vaccination and consider waiting for the availability of the updated formulation. There is currently an adequate supply of bivalent vaccines at York Region Public Health vaccination clinics for eligible individuals who choose to get a COVID-19 vaccine sooner than the updated XBB.1.5-containing formulation will be available.

Influenza Vaccine

The annual influenza vaccine will be available for higher-risk individuals in early October and eligibility will open to the general public starting October 30. Co-administration of the COVID-19 vaccine with the influenza vaccine is safe, convenient and encouraged for all age groups. Based on data from the Southern Hemisphere, we may be anticipating an early influenza season with moderate severity. Data shows a good influenza vaccine match to the strains circulating in the southern hemisphere.

York Region Public Health strongly recommends individuals at higher risk of morbidity/mortality from COVID-19 and influenza infections get both doses of an XBB.1.5-containing formulation of the COVID-19 vaccine and an influenza vaccine, including:

- Everyone age 65+
- Pregnant individuals (both vaccines are safe in pregnancy)
- Residents of long-term care, retirement homes and other congregated living settings

- Adults and children with immunocompromising or chronic health conditions (e.g., asthma, heart disease, diabetes, etc.)
- First Nation, Inuit and Metis Peoples, racialized groups and other equity-deserving populations
- People providing essential community services (and others, including health care workers who are at higher risk of transmitting influenza and COVID-19 to those at high risk)

York Region Public Health will be administering both COVID-19 and influenza vaccines in our [clinics](#) by appointment only. Appointments may be booked online at york.ca/COVID-19Vaccines.

How to advise children on influenza and COVID-19 vaccination

- It is highly recommended for children six months to five years of age to get an annual influenza vaccine as they are at higher risk of severe outcomes from influenza.

Note: Children six months to under nine years of age who are receiving their first influenza vaccine should be given two doses four weeks apart

- While children are generally not at high risk for severe outcomes from COVID-19 infection, [evidence](#) shows a recent booster dose can reduce the severity and length of symptoms, as well as [provide protection](#) against emergency room and urgent care visits in children

New RSV vaccine (Arexvy) for those 60+

On September 14, 2023, the Ontario Ministry of Health announced it would publicly fund GSK's Arexvy, the first RSV vaccine approved by Health Canada, for people 60 and older living in long-term care, some retirement homes, and Elder Care Lodges. The timing of when the Arexvy supply will arrive in Ontario is currently unclear, but we will update you as soon as we have further information. As it is a new vaccine, the time interval recommendation for Arexvy with other vaccines (including flu and COVID-19) is two weeks as a precautionary measure.

Contact Us

For more information, call our dedicated health care professional line at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 77280 (8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday) or visit york.ca/healthprofessionals. For the latest information on COVID-19 in York Region, please visit york.ca/COVID19.

For questions regarding COVID-19 vaccine ordering, please contact our Vaccine Inventory Program at COVID19vaccine@york.ca or call 1-877-464-9675 ext. 50174.

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