

COVID-19 VACCINES: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS LONG-TERM CARE AND RETIREMENT HOMES

August 2023

ORDERING COVID-19 VACCINES

1. Can I still request COVID-19 vaccines using the online COVID-19 Vaccine Order Survey?

The online COVID-19 Vaccine Order Survey will remain active until 4:30 p.m. on August 28, 2023. Effective August 29, 2023, all requests for COVID-19 vaccines from York Region Public Health (YRPH) must be submitted using the attached COVID-19 Vaccine Order Form. The order form is also posted on our webpage at www.york.ca/vaccineinventory.

2. Are refrigerator temperature logs required for my COVID-19 vaccine order?

Each COVID-19 Vaccine Order Form submission must be accompanied by a refrigerator temperature log, including the most current five (5) business days of temperature recordings. Refrigerator temperature logs should be attached as a photo or scanned image along with the completed COVID-19 Vaccine Order Form and submitted by e-mail to vaccineinventory@york.ca or by fax to (905) 830-0578.

3. When can I expect my COVID-19 vaccine order to be ready?

COVID-19 vaccine orders may be submitted at any time throughout the week. You will receive an e-mail confirmation once your COVID-19 vaccine order has been received by YRPH and placed in the queue for processing. Please note that missing information or incomplete refrigerator temperature logs will result in order processing delays.

COVID-19 vaccine orders submitted before 4:30 p.m. on Mondays will be shipped to York Region sub-office pick-up locations on Wednesday of the same week. Orders received after the cut-off time of 4:30 p.m. on Mondays will be shipped on Wednesday of the following week. The contact person identified on the vaccine order form will be notified once your order is ready for pick-up.

4. I don't need all the doses in a full multi-dose vial. Can I still order single doses in pre-filled syringes?

Individual doses of COVID-19 vaccine drawn into pre-filled syringes will no longer be supplied. COVID-19 vaccine orders will be distributed in multi-dose vials. The doses you request on the order form will be rounded up to the next full multi-dose vial.

5. I am concerned about vaccine wastage when receiving multi-dose vials. What can I do to minimize the wastage of publicly funded vaccines at my facility?

Vaccine wastage is an important concern because thawed COVID-19 vaccines have a limited shelf life. Before submitting a COVID-19 vaccine order, facilities are strongly encouraged to forecast the number of vaccine doses required and consider grouping vaccine administrations by scheduling designated clinic dates to minimize vaccine wastage.

In addition, proper inventory management, vaccine storage and handling measures must be implemented to minimize vaccine wastage at your facility. Please refer to the Ministry of Health's [Vaccine Storage and Handling Guidelines](#) for more information.

PICKING UP YOUR COVID-19 VACCINE ORDER

6. Will COVID-19 vaccine orders be delivered directly to my facility?

COVID-19 vaccines will no longer be delivered directly to your facility. All COVID-19 vaccine order submissions received on or after August 29, 2023, will be shipped to YRPH sub-office locations for facility pick-up. YRPH vaccine pick-up locations are:

- 17150 Yonge Street, Newmarket
- 9060 Jane Street, Vaughan
- 50 High Tech Road, Richmond Hill
- 4261 Highway 7 East, Markham
- 24262 Woodbine Avenue, Georgina

You can indicate on the vaccine order form the pick-up location that is most convenient for you. Pick-up hours are Monday to Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., except on statutory holidays. The contact person identified on the vaccine order form will be notified once your order is ready for pick-up.

7. What do I need to bring with me to pick up my vaccine order from York Region Public Health?

A YRPH-validated cooler that is pre-conditioned between +2.0°C and +8.0°C is required at the time of vaccine order pick-up. Ensure your cooler has the appropriate packaging material and packing configuration so that vaccines will be maintained within the +2.0°C to +8.0°C temperature range for the entire duration of transport. York Region staff will verify that your cooler is within +2.0°C to +8.0°C before releasing your vaccine order to you.

To avoid delays during vaccine order pick-up, allocate approximately 30 minutes to properly pre-condition the cooler at your facility and proceed to your pick-up location when your cooler's temperature has stabilized between +2.0°C to +8.0°C. [Pre-conditioning instructions](#) can be found directly on your cooler.

8. What should I do if my cooler's temperature falls below +2.0°C or rises above +8.0°C while the vaccines are being transported to my facility?

An Adverse Storage Condition (ASC) occurs when vaccines are exposed to temperatures below +2.0°C or above +8.0°C. After an ASC, the potency of the vaccine may be compromised.

If your cooler's temperature falls below +2.0°C or rises above +8.0°C while you are transporting vaccines, follow these steps upon arrival at your facility:

1. Label the vaccine order bag "Do Not Use" and immediately place it inside your refrigerator. Do not unpack your vaccine order.
2. Call YRPH at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 74065 as soon as possible to report the incident and wait for instructions. YRPH will assess the viability and safety of the exposed vaccines. **Do not use or discard the vaccines until the assessment is completed.**

RECEIVING YOUR COVID-19 VACCINE ORDER

9. What is the "discard date" for unpunctured COVID-19 vials and what is its significance?

The "discard date" refers to the date when an unpunctured vial of COVID-19 vaccine stored in the refrigerator between +2.0°C and +8.0°C should be discarded. Do not administer doses in an unpunctured vial beyond the discard date. Once the discard date has passed, all doses in the unpunctured vial must be wasted.

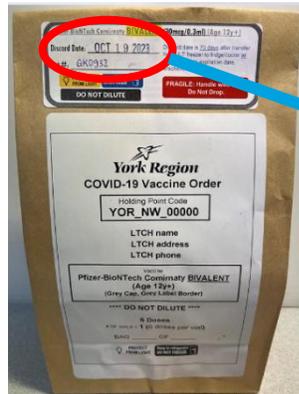
The discard date is determined by a set of factors: the COVID-19 vaccine type and formulation, the LOT number, and the date when the vaccines were picked up from YRPH. Please refer to the *COVID-19 Vaccine Storage and Pick-up Information Sheet* inside the vaccine order bag for further information.

10. Is the discard date indicated on my COVID-19 vaccine order bag different from the expiry date that is printed on the original label of the COVID-19 vaccine vial?

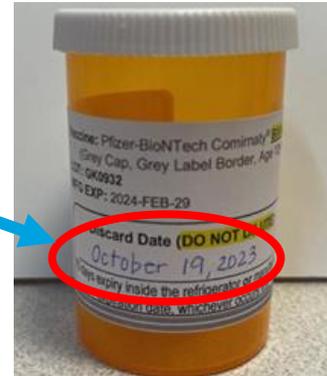
The discard date stamped on your COVID-19 vaccine order bag is different from the expiry date that is printed on the original label of the COVID-19 vaccine vial. The discard date of your COVID-19 vaccine order is determined by YRPH based on the specific COVID-19 vaccine type/formulation and LOT number you are receiving and the exact date when the vaccines were picked up from YRPH. The discard date of an unpunctured vial of COVID-19 vaccine supersedes the manufacturer's expiry date.

11. Where can I locate the discard date for my COVID-19 vaccine order?

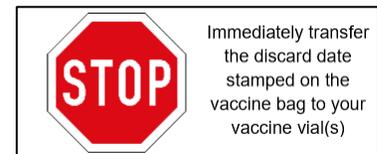
The discard date will be stamped on a label affixed to the front of the COVID-19 vaccine order bag. You must transcribe the discard date onto the vaccine box or amber vial label before placing it inside your refrigerator.



Transcribe the discard date on the front of the order bag onto the vaccine box or amber vial.



A sticker (as shown on the right) on the reverse side of the vaccine order bag will prompt you to complete this important task immediately upon returning to your facility.



Please refer to the *COVID-19 Vaccine Storage and Pick-up Information Sheet* inside the vaccine order bag for further information. If you are unable to locate the discard date for your COVID-19 vaccine order, contact our Vaccine Inventory Program at vaccineinventory@york.ca or 1-877-464-9675 ext. 74033 for assistance.

COVID-19 VACCINE STORAGE AND HANDLING

12. What are the steps involved when puncturing a multi-dose vial of COVID-19 vaccine for the first time? What is the “post puncture time allowance” and what is its significance for punctured multi-dose vials?

The date and time when a COVID-19 vaccine multi-dose vial is first punctured should be written directly on the vial by the immunizer. This information is important because punctured multi-dose vials must be used within the “post puncture time allowance”. Return the punctured multi-dose vial to the refrigerator for storage between +2.0°C and +8.0°C immediately after the required dose has been drawn up.

Do not administer doses remaining in a punctured multi-dose vial beyond the post-puncture time allowance. Once the post-puncture time allowance has been exceeded, any remaining doses in the punctured multi-dose vial must be wasted.

13. How do I determine the post-puncture time allowance for each type and formulation of COVID-19 vaccine?

The post-puncture time allowance is calculated from the time a multi-dose vial is first punctured. The post-puncture time allowance varies for each type and formulation of COVID-19 vaccine. For the most current information on post-puncture time allowance for COVID-19 vaccines, please refer to the Ministry of Health's Storage and Handling guidance documents for [Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines](#) and [Moderna COVID-19 vaccines](#).

14. How should I handle wasted or expired COVID-19 vaccines?

Promptly remove wasted or expired doses of COVID-19 vaccine from your refrigerator to prevent administration to residents or staff. Expired or wasted COVID-19 vaccine, either in punctured or unpunctured vials, should be disposed of at your facility per regulation and guidelines from the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change:

- [Environmental Protection Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.19, Regulation 347](#)
- [C-4: The Management of Biomedical Waste in Ontario](#)
- [Registration Guidance Manual for Generators of Liquid Industrial and Hazardous Waste](#)

Do not return expired or wasted COVID-19 vaccines to YRPH. Wasted or expired doses of COVID-19 vaccine should be recorded in COVaxON and reported to YRPH using the [Vaccination Reporting Tool](#) (Geocortex) for the purpose of reconciling vaccine inventory.

15. What should I do if vaccines are exposed to temperatures outside the +2.0°C and +8.0°C temperature range while being stored inside the facility's refrigerator?

An Adverse Storage Condition (ASC) occurs when vaccines are exposed to temperatures below +2.0°C or above +8.0°C. After an ASC, the potency of the vaccine may be compromised.

If your refrigerator's temperature falls below +2.0°C or rises above +8.0°C at any time while storing publicly funded vaccines, follow these steps:

1. Affix a "Do Not Use" signage on the refrigerator door to alert facility staff.
2. Call YRPH at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 74065 as soon as possible to report the incident and wait for instructions. Assistance is available afterhours, including weekends and statutory holidays. During regular business hours, YRPH will assess whether the exposed vaccines are suitable and safe for use. Do not use or discard the vaccines until the assessment is completed.

ADMINISTERING COVID-19 VACCINES

16. Can COVID-19 vaccines be co-administered with other vaccines, including influenza vaccines?

As per the [Ministry of Health's COVID-19 Vaccine Guidance](#): Individuals 6 months and older may receive a COVID-19 vaccine simultaneously with (i.e., same day), or at any time before or after non-COVID-19 vaccines (including live and non-live vaccines). Informed consent should include a discussion of the benefits and risks given the limited data available on administration of COVID-19 vaccines at the same time as, or shortly before or after, other vaccines. If vaccines must be co-administered, immunization on separate limbs is recommended; however, if the same limb must be used, the injection sites should be separated by at least 2.5 cm (1 inch).

17. Will I still need to submit reports in the Vaccination Reporting Tool (Geocortex) whenever COVID-19 vaccines are administered?

COVID-19 vaccine administration information must continue to be reported to YRPH through the [Vaccination Reporting Tool](#) (Geocortex) at the end of each clinic day for the purpose of reconciling vaccine inventory.

VACCINE ANCILLARY SUPPLIES

18. Will syringes and needles be provided with my COVID-19 vaccine orders?

Vaccine ancillary supplies (e.g., needles, syringes, alcohol swabs) will be provided with COVID-19 vaccine orders while provincial supplies last.

19. I am not familiar with the VanishPoint™ syringes which were supplied with my COVID-19 vaccine order. How do I use them?

Please refer to the [VanishPoint™ syringes Product Infosheet](#) for instructions on how to use this type of syringe.

COLD CHAIN MAINTENANCE INSPECTIONS

20. I am a long-term care home administrator whose facility has not yet had a cold chain maintenance inspection in 2023. What can I expect?

Long-term care homes are inspected annually. You may continue to order, store, and administer COVID-19 vaccines until your next cold chain maintenance inspection, which will be scheduled by a YRPH inspector before the end of 2023.

21. I am a retirement home administrator that has applied to participate in the 2023/2024 Universal Influenza Immunization Program (UIIP). My facility has not yet had a cold chain maintenance inspection in 2023. What can I expect?

Retirement homes that previously participated in the 2022/2023 UIIP campaign and have applied to the 2023/2024 UIIP may continue to order, store, and administer COVID-19 vaccines until your next cold chain maintenance inspection, which will be scheduled by a YRPH inspector before the commencement of the 2023/24 UIIP this Fall.

Retirement homes that did not participate in the 2022/2023 UIIP and have applied to the 2023/2024 UIIP can receive COVID-19 vaccines for same-day administration only until your vaccine refrigerator has been inspected by YRPH. A York Region-validated pre-conditioned cooler may be used for same-day storage of COVID-19 vaccines in the interim period. A cold chain maintenance inspection will be scheduled by a YRPH inspector before the commencement of the 2023/2024 UIIP this Fall.

22. I am a retirement home administrator that did not apply to participate in the 2023/2024 Universal Influenza Immunization Program (UIIP). I would like to order, store, and administer COVID-19 vaccines to residents and staff. What are my next steps?

Retirement homes that will not be participating in the 2023/2024 UIIP but are interested in ordering and storing COVID-19 vaccines at their facility beyond August 29, 2023, should contact YRPH Vaccine Inventory Program at vaccineinventory@york.ca or 1-877-464-9675 ext. 74033 to arrange a cold chain maintenance inspection of your vaccine refrigerator as soon as possible. The Ministry of Health requires all facilities that store publicly funded vaccines to have an annual cold chain maintenance inspection conducted by their local public health unit.