

Third Dose Recommendations for Immunocompromised Patients

August 30, 2021

Select groups of immunocompromised individuals are now eligible to receive a third dose of COVID-19 vaccine in Ontario.

Background

On August 18, 2021, in response to evolving data around the high transmissibility of the Delta variant and based on the recent experiences of other jurisdictions, Ontario's Vaccine Clinical Advisory Group (VCAG) recommended that a third dose of an approved COVID-19 vaccine be offered at least two months after the second dose to the following select populations of immunocompromised patients:

- Transplant recipients (including solid organ transplant and hematopoietic stem cell transplants)
- Patients with hematological cancers (examples include lymphoma, myeloma, leukemia) on active treatment (chemotherapy, targeted therapies, immunotherapy)
- Recipients of an anti-CD20 agent (e.g. rituximab, ocrelizumab, ofatumumab)

According to VCAG guidance, eligible immunocompromised patients should receive their third dose at least two months after their second dose. Immunization should be timed to optimize the patient's immune response and to minimize delays in the management of their underlying condition.

Residents of high-risk congregate settings including long-term care homes, high-risk licensed retirement homes and First Nations Elder Care lodges will also be offered a third dose of vaccine at an interval of at least five months after the second dose. York Region Public Health is making plans on how to deliver third doses to the above highest-risk individuals in a timely manner.

Please be advised that the populations listed above are, at present, the only groups eligible for a third vaccine dose in Ontario. Any further recommendations regarding third doses for other populations will be shared as they become available.

Please also note that anyone who does receive a third dose should continue to follow recommended public health measures for COVID-19, such as masking when indoors, physical distancing and hand washing. It is also strongly recommended that anyone who is in close contact with an immunocompromised individual (i.e., family, friends, caregivers) be vaccinated.

Clinical Considerations

Primary care providers and specialists who are familiar with their patients' medical histories are best positioned to determine which of their patients meet the provincial eligibility criteria and would benefit from a third vaccine dose, and to immunize eligible patients.

The VCAG recommends that prior to offering a third dose of vaccine, clinicians engage in a collaborative decision-making process with their patients, which considers:

1. The risks and benefits of a third dose of a COVID-19 vaccine
2. The potential risks /consequences of COVID-19
3. The risk of acquiring COVID-19 following the completion of a two-dose vaccine schedule
4. The limited evidence of the efficacy of a third dose of currently available COVID-19 vaccines



Note that third doses for eligible patients should be considered as an addition to the primary series and not as a booster dose.

An approved mRNA vaccine (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna) should be used for the third dose. Where possible, an eligible patient should receive the same vaccine as their previous doses; however, a different mRNA vaccine can be used.

Administering Third Doses

If you are unable to administer a third dose to your eligible patients, you may direct them to be immunized at a vaccination clinic in York Region or at a pharmacy that administers COVID-19 vaccines.

To have your patients vaccinated at a York Region clinic:

1. Complete and sign the attached referral form and provide a copy to your patient. Your patient **must** bring a copy of the completed and signed form with them to their appointment or we will be unable to immunize them.
2. Direct them to an immunization clinic to receive their vaccine. Clinic dates, locations and drop-in/appointment hours are available at [York.ca/covid19vaccine](https://york.ca/covid19vaccine)

Contact York Region Public Health

Thank you for all your efforts to support our immunization program in York Region. 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 questions regarding COVID-19 vaccine ordering please contact our Vaccine Inventory Program at COVID19vaccine@york.ca or 1-877-464-9675 ext. 50174

Health Care Provider Resources:

The following resources that may assist you in discussions with your patients regarding third doses:

- [COVID-19 Vaccination Recommendations for Special Populations](#), from Ontario's Ministry of Health (Aug 18, 2021)
- [Evidence to Recommendations Framework: Additional doses of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines as a part of a primary series for immunocompromised people](#), from Dr. Kathleen Dooling (CDC) (Aug 13, 2021)
- Clinical considerations for use of additional doses of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines as part of a primary vaccine series for immunocompromised people, from Dr. Neela Goswami (CDC) (Aug 13, 2021)
- [Recommendations on the use of COVID-19 vaccines: Special Populations](#), from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) (Jul 22, 2021)
- [Ontario College of Pharmacists COVID-19 Vaccine Information](#)