

COVID-19 Vaccine: What You Need to Know So Far

Update #1 to York Region health care providers as of December 24, 2020

Ontario's COVID-19 vaccination plan has progressed rapidly lately, from the first COVID-19 vaccine being approved for use in Canada, to select health care workers already receiving their first dose. Please see below for an overview of what's currently happening with the COVID-19 vaccine, as well as resources to review further information.

In Canada, all COVID-19 vaccines are free of charge. This vaccine will not be mandatory in Ontario, but is an important tool in the fight against COVID-19.

Health Canada approves first COVID-19 Vaccine

On December 9, 2020, Health Canada approved the first COVID-19 vaccine for use in Canada, produced by Pfizer-BioNTech. This mRNA vaccine must be stored below -60°C and is administered by injection in a two-dose series. The second dose is administered 21 days after the first. Based on clinical trials, the vaccine is reported to be 95% effective beginning one week after the second dose. There is currently no information on long-term protection with this vaccine.

[Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine \(tozinameran\) – Product Information](#)

[Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine – Product Monograph](#)

[Summary Basis of Decision - Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine](#)

Just prior to the release of this communication, a second COVID-19 vaccine produced by Moderna was approved by Health Canada for use in Canada. Distribution of this vaccine could potentially begin before the end of December; more information is expected from federal and provincial authorities soon.

Who should or should not get the vaccine?

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is currently approved for people who are 16 years of age and older without contraindications to the vaccine.

The vaccine should not be administered to:

- Individuals with a history of anaphylaxis after previous administration of the vaccine
- Individuals with severe allergic reaction or hypersensitivity to any [component](#) in this vaccine or its container

This vaccine is currently not recommended* for:

- Pregnant or breastfeeding
- Immunosuppressed due to disease or those with an autoimmune disorder
- Individuals younger than 16 years of age

**Not recommended until further evidence becomes available, as these groups were not included in the clinical trials for this vaccine.*



Vaccination should be deferred for anyone:

- Acutely ill or who has symptoms that could be due to COVID-19; these patients should get a COVID-19 test
- With confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection
- Who has received another vaccine (not a COVID-19 vaccine) in the previous 14 days.

Precautions should be taken and consultation with a health care provider should occur prior to vaccination for:

- Patients who have a bleeding problem, bruise easily or use a blood-thinning medicine
- Individuals should avoid trying to get pregnant for at least two months after getting both doses of the vaccine

Additional considerations for other patients from [current Ministry of Health guidance](#):

- In situations of suspected hypersensitivity or non-anaphylactic allergy to COVID-19 vaccine components, investigation is indicated which may lead to immunization in a controlled setting. Consultation with an allergist is advised.
- Individuals who have experienced a serious allergic reaction, including anaphylaxis, to another vaccine, drug or food should consult a health care provider before receiving the vaccine (until more information is available on allergic reactions and the COVID-19 vaccine).

In situations where precautions or considerations apply to a patient, consultation with a health care provider to review a patient’s individual potential risks and benefits to vaccination should occur.

Associated side effects

Like all medicines and other vaccines, the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine can cause [side effects](#). Those observed during the clinical trials were commonly reported side effects of vaccines. Most of these side effects were mild to moderate in intensity and usually resolved within a few days.

Potential side effects of the vaccine may include:

Very common <i>more than 10% of people (more than 1 in 10 doses)</i>	Common <i>1% - 10% of people (1 in 100 to 1 in 10 doses)</i>	Uncommon <i>1% of people (1 in 100 doses)</i>	Very rare
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• pain at the injection site• headache• feeling tired• muscle or joint pain• fever or chills	redness & swelling at the injection site	enlarged lymph nodes	serious allergic reactions such as anaphylaxis

The [product monograph](#) has a complete list of reported side effects/adverse reactions.

Reporting adverse events following immunization (AEFI)

Health care providers are required to report [adverse events following immunization](#) (AEFI) to York Region Public Health, including any AEFI following COVID-19 vaccine. An AEFI is any event or reaction that occurs after receiving a vaccine. Of particular interest are unusual or unexpected events, or serious reactions requiring urgent care. Use the [AEFI Reporting Form](#) (updated December 2020) from Public Health Ontario and fax the completed form to 905-898-5213, or call our Nurses Line at 1-877-464-9675, ext. 73452.

Differentiating post-vaccination symptoms and symptoms of COVID-19

Symptom screening of health care workers (HCW) post-immunization is important, as symptoms post-vaccination could be side effects that may be expected reactions because of the immune response working, or could be an AEFI or symptoms of COVID-19. The [ministry guidance document](#) outlines the current provincially recommended approach. Where COVID-19 is suspected, a HCW should be excluded for work and self-isolate and seek further medical evaluation. Unless confirmed to be COVID-19 disease-related symptoms, any potential AEFI should be reported.

Ontario Begins Vaccine Rollout Plan

COVID-19 vaccine distribution is coordinated with the Province of Ontario. The vaccine will roll out the in three phases, focusing first on vulnerable populations that are at greatest risk of COVID-19.

On December 15, 2020, Ontario started to roll out its three-phased implementation plan.

[Ontario's Vaccine Distribution Implementation Plan.](#)

	VACCINE QUANTITY	POPULATION TO BE VACCINATED	DISTRIBUTION SITES
 1	<p>Initial doses will vaccinate over 2,500 people, with additional shipments arriving over the coming weeks</p> <p>90,000 doses of Pfizer-BioNTech and estimated 35,000-85,000 doses of Moderna vaccines (pending approval) are expected in the coming weeks</p> <p>An estimated total of over 2M doses is expected in this phase</p>	<p>Residents, essential caregivers, and staff of congregate care settings for seniors</p> <p>Health care workers</p> <p>Adults in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit populations</p> <p>Adult recipients of chronic home health care</p>	<p>Initially, two pilot sites, followed by selected hospital sites in Grey-Lockdown and Red-Control zones, expanding to approximately 21 hospitals across the province</p> <p>LTC Homes and Retirement Homes as soon as feasible.</p>
 2	<p>Increasing stock of vaccines available.</p>	<p>Expanded for health care workers, long-term care homes, retirement homes, home care patients with chronic conditions and additional First Nation communities and urban Indigenous populations, including Métis and Inuit adults.</p>	<p>Expanded vaccination sites</p>
 3	<p>Vaccines available for every Ontarian who wants to be immunized.</p>	<p>All eligible Ontarians</p>	<p>Widely available across Ontario</p>

On December 14, 2020, Ontario began phase 1A of the rollout plan, with vaccines being administered at pilot testing sites in Toronto and Ottawa.

On December 18, 2020, phase 1B of the rollout was announced which includes distributing doses at additional hospital sites across Ontario. In York Region, **Southlake Regional Health Centre and Mackenzie Health** will be receiving vaccine doses as part of this plan.

These sites will be able to administer vaccines soon to health care workers and essential caregivers who work in hospitals, long-term care homes, retirement homes and other congregate settings caring for seniors. These sites are not open to the public for vaccinations.

Due to the storage and handling requirements of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, administration of this vaccine is limited to designated hospitals. As additional vaccines become available, York Region Public Health will communicate on distribution to additional settings.

There is currently no information on when physicians can begin to order COVID-19 vaccines for their patients.

Ministry of Health Resources

The following guidance documents have been released from the Ministry of Health to assist your practice:

- [COVID-19 About Vaccines Info Sheet](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine After Care Sheet](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine Approval Process and Safety](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic Operations Planning Checklist](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine Consent Form \(Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine\)](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine Consent Support for COVax Data Collection - Hospitals](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine Long-Term Care Homes Cover Letter](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine - What you need to know before your COVID-19 vaccine appointment](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine Obtaining Informed Consent - Script for Health Care Providers](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine - Vaccine Administration of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine Availability and Rollout](#)
- [Information Sheet for Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine](#)
- [Guidance for Vaccinated Health Care Workers](#)

Keeping Patients/Clients Informed

As health professionals, you are a primary source of trusted information for your patients. Please continue to provide evidence-based, trustworthy information on COVID-19 vaccines. Please encourage individuals to visit york.ca/covid19vaccine, covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccines-ontario, and Canada.ca/covid19.

Even though these vaccines provide hope for the future, we all must continue to follow public health guidelines to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 – including after receipt of COVID-19 vaccine. Please continue to recommend that everyone:

- Stay home as much as possible and limit close contact to those in your immediate household
- [Practice physical distancing](#) with anyone outside of your household by staying 2-metres away from everyone else
- Wash your hands thoroughly and often
- Practice respiratory etiquette
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands
- Wear a [face mask or covering](#) when inside public places and when physical distancing cannot be maintained
- Clean high-touch surfaces often
- Download the [COVID-Alert app](#)

Contact York Region Public Health

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact York Region Public Health at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 73452 or via email at vaccineinformationline@york.ca for vaccine-related questions, or contact the dedicated line for health professionals at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 77280.