



Durham Region Health Department Facts about...



COVID-19 Vaccines

This Facts About contains information for Health Canada authorized XBB COVID-19 mRNA Vaccines for individuals 6 months and older.

[COVID-19](#) is a viral infection that primarily affects the lungs. Some people may have a mild illness and others may get very sick, including seniors or people with a pre-existing health condition. Very rarely, some children can get a serious inflammatory condition. The long-term effects of COVID-19 are not fully known. Some people are at greater risk due to work or living conditions.

How COVID-19 vaccines work

mRNA vaccines work by telling the cells in your body to make a spike protein that is found on the surface of the virus that causes COVID-19. The **recombinant protein subunit vaccine** works by introducing a purified spike protein to the body's immune system. An adjuvant (Matrix-M) is also introduced to boost the immune system's response. The spike protein from **COVID-19 vaccines** does not make you sick but will trigger your body to make antibodies. Antibodies will protect you from getting sick if you are exposed to the virus.

How effective are the vaccines?

COVID-19 vaccines have been shown to lessen the risk of COVID-19 infection and symptomatic confirmed COVID-19, and are very effective at preventing severe disease, hospitalization, and death due to COVID-19. It will take about two weeks after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine to develop maximum protection against COVID-19.

Are the vaccines safe?

All COVID-19 vaccines available in Canada:

- Were tested in large clinical trials to ensure they meet safety standards.
- Have been licensed and approved by Health Canada.
- Are monitored closely for any significant reactions and steps are taken to ensure safety standards continue to be met.

Who should get the vaccines?

Individuals 6 months of age and older who have **not been previously vaccinated** against COVID-19 should be vaccinated.

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905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 | durham.ca/health

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



Individuals 6 months and older who have **been previously vaccinated** against COVID-19 should follow [Ontario Ministry of Health recommendations for those previously vaccinated](#).

What is the schedule for the vaccine?

Individuals who have **not been previously vaccinated**:

- **6 months- 4 years:**
 - Moderna XBB (25 mcg): **two** doses given at a recommended interval of 56 days apart (three doses if [moderately to severely immunocompromised](#)). Individuals can receive their second dose less than 56 days after their previous dose with informed consent. If so, the minimum interval is at least 28 days.
 - Pfizer XBB (3 mcg): **three** doses given at a recommended interval of 56 days apart (four doses if [moderately to severely immunocompromised](#)). Individuals can receive their second dose less than 56 days after their previous dose with informed consent. If so, the minimum interval is at least 21 days for dose 2. The minimum interval for dose 3 is 56 days after dose 2.
- **5-11 years:**
 - Moderna XBB (25 mcg) & Pfizer XBB (10 mcg): **one** dose (two doses if [moderately to severely immunocompromised](#)).
- **12 years and older:**
 - Moderna XBB (50 mcg) & Pfizer XBB (30 mcg): **one** dose (two doses if [moderately to severely immunocompromised](#)).
 - Novavax XBB (5mcg): **one** dose (two doses if [moderately to severely immunocompromised](#)). Individuals 12-years of age and older who are not able or willing to receive an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine may receive Novavax XBB.

Individuals who have **been previously vaccinated**: follow [Ontario Ministry of Health recommendations for those previously vaccinated](#).

Some select populations are recommended to be [re-vaccinated](#).

For individuals 6 months of age and older, COVID-19 vaccines may be administered at the same time, or at any time before or after non-COVID-19 vaccines.

Vaccine benefits

While many people with COVID-19 have only mild illness, others may get a severe illness. There is no way to know how COVID-19 will affect you, even if you are not at increased risk of severe complications. COVID-19 vaccination helps protect you by creating an immune response and helping to protect against COVID-19 infection which can result in serious illness, hospitalization and in rare instances, death.

Side effects and risks

Some people may experience side effects from the vaccine, but these will likely be mild and resolve after a few days. Some of the symptoms are part of the body's response to developing immunity.

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Common side effects may include:

- Pain, tenderness, itchiness, redness or swelling at the injection site
- Headache
- Tiredness or feeling unwell
- Muscle or joint pain
- Fever or chills
- Nausea
- Swelling or tenderness under the armpit (Moderna only)
- Vomiting or diarrhea

In rare cases, serious allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) can occur. Seek immediate medical attention if you have trouble breathing, have hives, or swelling of the face and throat. Vaccine side effects will continue to be tracked.

Rare cases of myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle) and/or pericarditis (inflammation of the lining around the heart) have been reported following vaccination with COVID-19 mRNA vaccines (Pfizer or Moderna). Severe side effects are rare. Seek medical attention right away if you develop any of these symptoms after receiving an mRNA (Pfizer or Moderna) vaccine:

- Chest pain, pressure, or tightness
- Shortness of breath
- Feelings of having a fast beating, fluttering, or pounding heart

If you have a reaction to the vaccine, contact your health care provider who will report the side effect directly to the Health Department. The Health Department will keep track of the reported side effects to make sure the vaccine continues to be safe.

Precautions

- Delay vaccination if you
 - have a fever,
 - are sick with COVID-19 symptoms, or
 - were diagnosed with myocarditis or pericarditis following mRNA vaccination.
- If you are on blood thinner medication, a smaller needle will be used, and you will need to apply pressure for longer after getting the vaccine to reduce bruising.

Do NOT get this vaccine if you:

- Have allergies to any vaccine ingredients, including polyethylene glycol (PEG), and Tromethamine (trometamol), and Trometamol hydrochloride or Polysorbate 80
- Have a known hypersensitivity to tromethamine (Moderna COVID-19 vaccine); or
- Have had a severe reaction to a previous dose of this vaccine.

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Talk to your health care provider first if you:

- Have a weakened immune system due to illness or treatment, or
- Have a bleeding disorder.

Vaccination after COVID-19 infection

Individuals who have had a known COVID-19 infection are encouraged to get the vaccine if they are eligible. More information, including how long to wait and the definition of COVID-19 infection, is available at www.durham.ca/COVIDvaccines.

After you get the vaccine

There is a small chance you may still get COVID-19 after being vaccinated and spread the virus to others. Therefore, you will need to continue to practice recommended public health measures, such as:

- Continue to [wear a mask](#) in required settings and consider wearing a mask in other indoor settings.
- Wash your hands often with warm water and soap or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Consider physical distancing when possible.
- Consider avoiding enclosed, poorly ventilated spaces and crowded places when possible.
- If you develop symptoms or are a close contact of a person with COVID-19, refer to [COVID-19 Case and Contact Information Hub](#).

For more information talk to your health care provider or visit durham.ca/COVIDvaccines.

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