



## Durham Region Health Department **Facts about...**



# COVID-19 Vaccines

## What is it?

COVID-19 vaccines protect against the SARS-CoV-2 infection and prevent severe disease, including hospitalization and death due to COVID-19. They can decrease the risk of post-COVID-19 conditions. For more information about COVID-19 see [Facts About...Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#).

- There are two Health Canada approved COVID-19 vaccines available in Ontario, Moderna Spikevax (for individuals 6 months of age and older) and Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty (for individuals 12 years of age and older). Both vaccines are mRNA vaccines and target the Omicron KP.2 variant. Older versions of the COVID-19 vaccine are no longer available.
- mRNA vaccines work by telling the cells in your body to make a protein that will trigger an immune response. Once triggered, your body makes antibodies which help you fight the infection if the real virus does enter your body in the future. mRNA vaccines do not use a live virus to trigger an immune response.
- COVID-19 mRNA vaccines are held to the same high standards for safety, effectiveness and quality as all vaccines authorized for use in Canada. Only vaccines that meet those standards can be approved.

## How effective are the COVID-19 vaccines?

- COVID-19 vaccines have been shown to lessen the risk of COVID-19 infection and symptoms of confirmed COVID-19 individuals.
- COVID-19 vaccines are very effective at preventing severe complications, 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.
- Vaccine protection decreases over time. Like the influenza vaccine, the COVID-19 vaccine is recommended each year, or more frequently for certain high-risk populations.

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905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 | [durham.ca/health](https://durham.ca/health)

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



# Who should receive COVID-19 vaccine?

This spring 2025, COVID-19 vaccine is recommended for individuals who are at increased risk of COVID-19 infection, including:

- Adults 65 years of age and older:
  - 80 years and older are recommended to receive an additional dose
  - 65 to 79 years of age may receive an additional dose
- Adult residents of long-term care homes and other congregate living settings for seniors.
- Individuals 6 months of age and older who are **moderately to severely immunocompromised** (due to underlying condition or treatment).
- Individuals 55 years and older who identify as First Nations, Inuit, or Metis and their non-Indigenous household members who are 55 years and older.

# Who should not get the vaccine?

- Babies under 6 months of age
- Individuals:
  - with a serious acute illness should wait until they feel better before getting the vaccine.
  - who have had a severe reaction to a previous dose of the vaccine.
  - with a known allergy to any components of the vaccine, including polyethylene glycol (PEG), and Tromethamine (trometamol), and Trometamol hydrochloride.
  - with a known hypersensitivity to polysorbate 80.
  - diagnosed with myocarditis (with or without pericarditis) within 6 weeks of receiving a previous COVID-19 mRNA vaccine.
  - with a history of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) or multisystem inflammatory syndrome in adults (MIS-A) unrelated to a previous vaccination should follow up with their health care provider to determine when they can receive the vaccine.
  - with an uncontrolled bleeding disorder should follow up with their health care provider.

Individuals who are not at increased risk of COVID-19 infection are not recommended to receive COVID-19 vaccine in the spring regardless of if doses were received in the fall. These individuals are recommended to be vaccinated during the next annual COVID-19 vaccine program (i.e., 2025/2026)

Individuals who had a test-confirmed COVID-19 infection in the last 3 to 5 months may delay vaccination and should speak to their health care provider about when they can receive the vaccine.

Individuals who are unable to receive an mRNA vaccine, should speak with their health care provider about treatment options.

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# What is the schedule for the vaccine?

**High-risk individuals who have not been previously vaccinated:**

- **6 months and older** (moderately to severely immunocompromised):
  - two or three doses of COVID-19 vaccine given 4-8 weeks apart
- **All other individuals who are at increased risk of COVID-19 infection** (see above for criteria):
  - one dose of COVID-19 vaccine

Previously vaccinated individuals, who have completed their primary series and are at **increased risk of COVID-19 infection** are recommended to receive an additional COVID-19 vaccine this spring 2025.

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.

## Are there side effects with the vaccine?

The COVID-19 vaccine is safe and well tolerated. Side effects are generally mild and last a short time. Some people may experience pain, redness or swelling at the injection site, swelling or tenderness under the armpit (Moderna only), feeling tired, headache, muscle pain, chills and/or joint pain.

Children 6 months to 2 years of age may also experience irritability, sleepiness, and loss of appetite. These reactions are common after routine non-COVID-19 vaccinations.

If you think a serious reaction is developing, seek medical attention right away. Any unusual or significant changes in your health or your child's health after the immunization should be reported to a health care provider and the Health Department at 905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729.

For more information, including where to get vaccinated, visit [durham.ca/covidvaccines](https://durham.ca/covidvaccines).

April 15, 2025

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