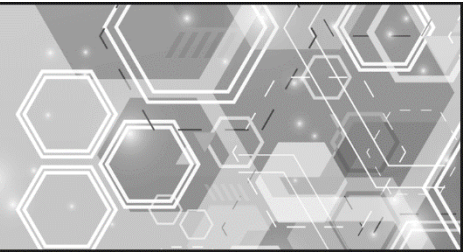




Durham Region Health Department **Facts about...**



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 in Ontario, Moderna Spikevax (for people 6 months of age and older) and Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty (for people 5 to 11 years of age, and people 12 years of age and older). Both vaccines are mRNA vaccines and target the Omicron LP .8.1 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 approved 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 in people with COVID-19.
- 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

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



Who should get the COVID-19 vaccine?

The 2025/2026 COVID-19 vaccine program has moved to a yearly program, with guidance provided each year for the September to August respiratory season and distinctions made between specific populations.

1. High-risk populations, group 1

The following people have a higher risk of COVID-19 disease and should get COVID-19 vaccine dose(s) as soon as it is available in the fall and **should** get another dose in the spring:

- Adults 80 years and older
- Adult residents of long-term care homes and other congregate living settings for seniors.
- People 6 months of age and older who are moderately to severely immunocompromised (due to specific underlying condition or treatment).
- People 55 years and older who identify as First Nations, Inuit, or Metis and their non-Indigenous household members who are 55 years and older.
- Adults aged 65 to 79 years should get COVID-19 vaccine dose(s) as soon as it is available in the fall and **may** receive an additional dose in the spring.

2. High-risk populations, group 2

The following people have a higher risk of COVID-19 disease and should get COVID-19 vaccine dose(s) as soon as it is available in the fall:

- Residents in congregate living settings who are aged 17 years and under
- Pregnant people
- People from First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities who are aged 54 years and under
- Members of underserved communities
- Health care workers and other care providers in facilities and community settings
- People 6 months of age and older with underlying medical conditions

3. Priority populations

The following people can get COVID-19 vaccine dose(s) as soon as it is available in the fall:

- Children 6 months to 4 years of age
- People with significant exposure to birds or mammals (such as poultry, livestock, slaughterhouse and processing plant workers, wildlife officers/researchers, and veterinarians)

4. General population

All people (6 months of age and older) who do not belong to the high-risk or priority populations described above can get a COVID-19 vaccine dose in the fall, **starting on October 27, 2025.**

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Who should not get the vaccine?

- People:
 - under 6 months of age.
 - with a serious acute illness should wait until they feel better before getting the vaccine.
 - who have had a severe reaction to a previous COVID-19 vaccine, or with a known allergy to any part of the vaccine, including polyethylene glycol (PEG), Tromethamine (trometamol), and polysorbate 80.
 - diagnosed with myocarditis (with or without pericarditis) within 6 weeks of having a previous COVID-19 mRNA vaccine.
 - with a history compatible with pericarditis who have not had a cardiac work up or who still have symptoms.
- People should follow up with their health care provider before getting COVID-19 vaccine(s) if they have:
 - been diagnosed with multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) or multisystem inflammatory syndrome in adults (MIS-A) within the last 90 days and/or still have symptoms.
 - developed Guillain-Barré syndrome after a previous COVID-19 vaccine.
 - an uncontrolled bleeding disorder.

What is the schedule for the vaccine?

People in high-risk population group 1 should receive two doses (Fall 2025 and Spring 2026).

The following groups should get one annual dose of COVID-19 vaccine in Fall 2025:

- High-risk populations group 2
- Priority populations
- General population

COVID-19 vaccines can be given 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 few days. Some people may experience pain, redness or swelling at the injection site, swelling or tenderness under the armpit, feeling tired, headache, muscle pain, chills and/or joint pain.

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

If you think a serious reaction is developing, see a health care provider right away. Any new or big changes in your health or your child's health after the vaccine 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

October 24, 2025