

COVID-19 vaccines for Ontario

January 8, 2021

COVID-19 vaccines

- Vaccines are safe, effective and the best way to protect you and those around you from serious illnesses like COVID-19.
 - Vaccines work with your immune system so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. This can reduce your risk of developing COVID-19 and make your symptoms milder if you do get it.
 - Our supply will not arrive all at once, so distribution will happen in stages. The goal is for everyone in Ontario to be able to get a COVID-19 vaccination if they want one, as soon as enough doses are available from manufacturers.
 - Ontario has started to roll out its three-phased vaccine distribution implementation plan.
 - Phase 1, starting December 15, 2020: Limited doses of the vaccine available for health care workers in hospitals, long-term care homes and retirement homes, other congregate care settings and remote Indigenous communities.
 - Phase 2, starting this winter: Increasing stock of vaccines, available to all health care workers, residents in long-term care homes, retirement homes, home care patients with chronic conditions and additional Indigenous communities.
 - Phase 3, starting when vaccines and doses are available: Vaccines available widely across Ontario for anyone who wants to be immunized.
 - Check [Ontario.ca/covidvaccine](https://ontario.ca/covidvaccine) regularly for up-to-date information on the vaccine and implementation phases – the web page is updated frequently.
-

What you can do now

Until vaccines are more widely available, we must all continue to follow public health measures to help stop the spread of COVID-19:

- Follow the restrictions during **the second provincial emergency**
- **Stay home** – save lives and don't put others at risk
- **Practise physical distancing** – stay 2 metres away from anyone who is not in your household
- **Wear a mask or face covering** in public spaces and when physical distancing isn't possible
- **Take a self-assessment** to help you decide if you need a COVID-19 test
- **Download the COVID Alert mobile app** to protect yourself and your community
- **Find sector-specific resources** to prevent COVID-19 in the workplace
- Stay up-to-date with the latest **information about COVID-19 in Ontario**

Vaccine safety

- Safe and reliable vaccines can help protect you and your family from COVID-19.
 - They will be an important tool to help stop the spread of the virus and allow individuals, families and workers to safely resume normal life.
 - The coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine does not cause a coronavirus infection. It helps to build up your immunity to the virus, so your body will fight it off more easily if it affects you.
 - This can reduce your risk of developing coronavirus and make your symptoms milder if you do get it.
 - The effectiveness and immune response of the vaccine is being monitored as the vaccine is rolled out.
 - Vaccination is expected to be an effective way to prevent the spread and reduce the impact of COVID-19.
-

- **Only vaccines that Health Canada determines to be safe and effective will be approved for use in Canada and available in Ontario.**
- After independent and thorough scientific reviews for safety, efficacy and quality, Health Canada has approved two vaccines for use in Canada:
 - [Pfizer-BioNTech](#)– approved on December 9, 2020
 - [Moderna](#) – approved on December 23, 2020
- This means the vaccines:
 - were tested on a large number of people through extensive clinical trials
 - have met all the requirements for approval, including safety
 - will be monitored for any adverse reactions that may occur after vaccination and appropriate measures will be taken
- Both vaccines require two doses for your body to develop adequate immunity.
- After two doses, they are expected to be 94-95% effective, which will lower how much of the virus can spread in the population, help build herd immunity and stop the pandemic.
- They were both manufactured in Belgium.
- [Learn more about the vaccines from Health Canada's website.](#)

Vaccine development

- Creating a new vaccine typically takes years. However, the progress on COVID-19 vaccines is happening quickly for many reasons, including:
 - being informed by decades of research on other strains of coronavirus prior to COVID-19, such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Sars-CoV (SARS)
 - advances in science and technology
 - international collaboration among scientists, health professionals, researchers, industry and governments
 - increased dedicated funding
-

- Before any vaccines are available in Ontario, they:
 - undergo rigorous clinical trials to ensure they are safe and effective
 - are evaluated and authorized for use by Health Canada, using rigorous standards
- Ontario's plan to make sure vaccines remain safe for Ontarians includes:
 - securely and safely transporting and storing vaccines at required conditions and temperatures
 - establishing safe clinic spaces to give people immunizations, including providing the required training to those administering vaccines
 - monitoring for any adverse reactions or side effects that may occur after vaccination and taking appropriate measures, including working with the federal government and other provinces and territories
- Health Canada will continue to monitor all authorized vaccines to ensure they continue to be safe and effective.
- Read [more information on vaccines](#) and [vaccine authorization updates](#) from the Government of Canada.

How we will distribute Pfizer-BioNTech vs Moderna vaccines

- Both COVID-19 vaccines are fragile and must be stored and transported in special conditions to keep them stable and effective.
- While you can store the Moderna vaccine at -20 degrees Celsius, the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine requires colder temperatures, around -70 Celsius. This means the Moderna vaccine is easier to transport and store safely.
- Because of this, the government plans to administer the:
 - Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine primarily in hospitals in urban areas
 - Moderna vaccine in long-term care homes, congregate settings that provide care for seniors and more rural and remote communities

Who will be able to get vaccinated first

- Since there will be limited supply in the first few months of the vaccine program, some groups will be able to get a COVID-19 vaccine in the early phases.
- Early doses of the vaccine will be available for:
 - residents, staff, essential caregivers (including family caregivers) and other employees who work in congregate living settings providing care for seniors as they are at higher risk of infection and serious illness from COVID-19
 - health care workers, including hospital employees, other staff who work or study in hospitals and other health care personnel
 - adults in First Nations, Métis and Inuit populations where infection can have disproportionate consequences, including those living in remote or isolated areas where risk of transmission is high
 - adult recipients of chronic home health care
- As further information becomes available from clinical trials and from Health Canada approvals, the groups for which the vaccines are authorized for use could change.
- Ontario will also prioritize regions with the highest rates of COVID-19 infection – those in the Red - Control and Grey - Lockdown zones when we receive the vaccines.
- These priorities are based on advice from the:
 - [Ontario COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force](#)
 - [National Advisory Committee on Immunization](#)
- The COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force is advising Ontario as it plans the immunization program and delivers vaccines.

Ethical framework for COVID-19 vaccine distribution

- An ethical framework is guiding vaccine prioritization and distribution across the province. This will ensure that:
 - decisions related to vaccine distribution priorities are consistent, fair and transparent
 - diverse perspectives are captured in government feedback and recommendations, so that all Ontarians who want to get vaccinated are accounted for
 - The framework includes the following principles:
 - **minimize harms and maximize benefits**, to:
 - reduce overall illness and death related to COVID-19
 - protect those at greatest risk of serious illness and death due to biological, social, geographical and occupational factors
 - protect critical infrastructure
 - promote social and economic well-being
 - **equity** in the distribution of vaccines without bias or discrimination, to:
 - reduce disparities in illness and death related to COVID-19
 - ensure benefits for groups experiencing greater burdens from the pandemic
 - respect the equal moral status and human rights of all individuals
 - **fairness**, to:
 - ensure that every individual within equally prioritized groups has the same opportunity to be vaccinated
 - ensure inclusive, consistent and culturally safe and appropriate processes when making decisions about vaccine prioritization
 - ensure jurisdictional ambiguity does not interfere with vaccine distribution (for example, Jordan's Principle)

 - **transparency**, to:
-

- ensure the principles and rationale, decision-making processes and plans for COVID-19 prioritization are clear, understandable and communicated to the public
 - **legitimacy**, making decisions based on the best available scientific evidence, shared values and input from affected parties including those historically underrepresented, to:
 - ensure decisions have the intended impact
 - include participation of affected parties in the creation and review of decisions and decision-making processes
 - **public trust**, to:
 - ensure decisions and decision-making processes are informed by these principles to advance confidence and trust in Ontario's COVID-19 immunization program
-