

Frequently Asked Questions

Vaccinations for long-term care staff, residents and caregivers

The vaccination process

1. When will vaccinations take place for:
 - Residents
 - Staff
 - Essential caregivers

Ongoing vaccine delays and reduced shipments have forced the Ontario government to [update its goal](#) of completing the administration of first doses of COVID-19 vaccines to residents in each long-term care, high-risk retirement and First Nations elder care home to February 10.

The province is expecting approximately 310,000 doses to be delivered in the remaining weeks of February. Once sufficient doses are available, vaccinations will resume to provide first doses for staff and essential caregivers in settings with the most vulnerable populations.

2. **Are vaccinations delivered in the long-term care home, a hospital, or other location?**

Mobile clinics have been implemented to vaccinate residents in long-term care homes, and hospital-based clinics continue to be offered as well.

3. **How does the vaccination process work?**

Long-term care home operators have been encouraged to collaborate with their local health units to plan ahead for vaccine clinics in their homes. This includes providing residents, caregivers and staff both with details about the clinic and about the vaccine itself.

Everyone must provide consent each time they are vaccinated. In cases where a resident is not capable of providing consent, the long-term care home operator will communicate with the substitute decision-maker.

For more information, see the Ministry of Health's fact sheet: [COVID-19: What you need to know before your COVID-19 vaccine appointment](#)

4. **What happens if a home is in outbreak?**

Vaccination should be deferred in long-term care homes without adequate outbreak management to address ongoing transmission, staffing issues and infection control challenges until those measures are in place to stabilize the home. Public Health Units should work with the home to quickly develop a plan to vaccinate as early as possible once the long-term care home is stabilized. The outbreak does not need to be declared over for vaccination to begin.

Ideally, long-term care homes in outbreak should facilitate vaccination of staff on-site to minimize the risk of any asymptomatic cases accidentally exposing others at off-site vaccination clinics.

If on-site vaccination is not possible, asymptomatic staff not in isolation/quarantine and working in an outbreak facility may attend an off-site clinic for vaccination. Appointments should ideally be scheduled at the end of the clinic day to reduce risk of exposure to others in the clinic.

5. **Are new residents required to receive vaccinations prior to entering a home? If they have not been vaccinated, is there a quarantine?**

Public Health Unit partners have been asked to work closely with the long-term care homes to develop a "maintenance plan" for new residents, staff and essential caregivers to get vaccinated.

6. **If someone misses their first dose (e.g., is absent from the home when doses are administered, or changes their mind after an initial refusal), how do they catch up? Similarly, if a long-term care home wants to hire a new employee who hasn't been vaccinated, what is the process for getting them their shots?**

As the vaccine rollout proceeds, plans will be made to return to homes to capture people who missed their first dose.

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7. **Can a person refuse to have their information captured in an electronic information system?**

Yes. Most people's information will be captured in the COVax data system. However, a person can choose not to have their information entered into this system. Their information will be captured on a paper form.

The second dose

8. **Will people receive their second dose at the originally scheduled time (21 or 28 days)?**

The Ministry of Health and public health units are working to ensure that people receive their second doses within the appropriate window.

Intervals between doses will only be extended as needed, to support vaccination of the most vulnerable populations:

- Pfizer-BioNTech:
 - Maintain the recommended maximum interval for resident groups (21-27 days)
 - For all other groups, expand the interval to 35 days and no more than 42 days
- Moderna: Maintain 28-day interval

9. **Is it safe to delay receiving the second dose?**

The product monograph specifies the approved/safe window between receiving the first and second doses.

On January 12, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) updated its recommendations on the use of COVID-19 mRNA Vaccines, indicating that within certain contextual circumstances, the dose interval

could be increased up to 42 days. This is supported by recommendation from the WHO and CDC.

- NACI stated that efforts should be made to immunize individuals according to the recommended interval schedules (Pfizer = 19-28 days; Moderna = 21-28 days) and that two doses are required.
- Contextual circumstances include: delivery logistics and vaccine supply, the current epidemiological status and projections and the health care capacity.

Experience with other vaccines shows that people whose booster dose is given later than recommended by the drug manufacturer will have a similar or even better immune response.

After the vaccine

10. What proof of vaccination will people receive?

The COVID-19 vaccine will not be mandated for Ontarians but we do strongly suggest that people embrace the opportunity.

Ontarians receive proof of immunization for a variety of shots and this is not exclusive to COVID-19. Each individual vaccinated receives a printed receipt of vaccination and if they consent to receive information electronically and provide the needed details, they will receive a digital receipt electronically via email.

Ontario will continue to take action to protect the public from COVID-19. With the arrival of more COVID-19 vaccines, we look forward to working with our health experts and businesses on reopening our province and our economy.

11. After people receive both doses of the vaccine, will they still need to be tested for COVID-19 in order to work at or visit a long-term care home?

Based on a review of available evidence and expert guidance, regular testing will remain important even after individuals have received their COVID-19 vaccines. Rapid antigen testing is expected to continue for the foreseeable future.

Vaccination and Visitors

12. **At what point will families be able to get vaccinated?**

Essential caregivers of long-term care residents are eligible to receive the vaccine in phase One. Other family members should check the province's [phased rollout](#) to find out when their turn to be vaccinated will come.

13. **Does vaccination have an impact on visiting restrictions at long-term care homes?**

Being vaccinated does not affect visiting restrictions.

While two doses of the COVID vaccines confer 95% immunity, we don't yet know if getting the vaccine will prevent you from spreading the illness to other people. That's why it's important to be vigilant about following all the prevention rules to help stop the spread:

- Stay home
- Practise physical distancing
- Wear a mask
- Wash your hands

For more information on visiting, see [COVID-19: Long-term care homes in areas with visitor restrictions](#)

More resources

[Get the facts about COVID-19](#) – basics, symptoms and treatment.

Learn more about vaccine [development, safety and medical information](#).

If your question isn't answered here, you can call the ServiceOntario INFOLine at 1-866-532-3161 (Toll-free in Ontario only)