

COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Compiled by: Niraj Maulkhan, PharmD, RPh - TC FHT's Clinical Pharmacist

Reviewed By: Taddle Creek Family Health Team (TC FHT) COVID Vaccine Planning Committee

On a regular basis, this FAQ document about the COVID-19 vaccine and its availability will be updated. Questions have been chosen using multiple sources (e.g., Gov't of Canada, Toronto Public Health, Ontario College of Pharmacists, Ontario College of Family Physicians, etc.) and also from patient questions. Content will be added and updated so please check back regularly.

Reviewed: April 7, 2021

1. Who can receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

Ontario's plan prioritizes vaccines for those at greatest risk of severe illness and those who care for them. In the City of Toronto, those who are currently receiving the vaccine include:

Phase 1: High-risk populations

- 60 years old or older in 2021
- First Nations Metis and Inuit Adults
- Chronic Home Health Care Recipients
- Long-Term Care Home Residents and Staff
- Assisted Living Residents and Staff
- Retirement home residents and staff
- First Nations Elder Care home residents and staff
- Essential caregivers for care home residents
- Personal Support Workers
- Front-line health care workers

In some pharmacies in the province, including those in Toronto:

- 55 years old and older in 2021

Some **Toronto Hospitals and Ontario Health Teams** are currently providing vaccination pre-registration or appointments to individuals based on provincial prioritization guidance.

In our region (Mid-West Toronto), we are entering Phase 2 of the Ontario COVID-19 vaccine strategy. This means that people in the **highest-risk and high-risk** health categories can now **pre-register with the University Health Network for vaccination**. Pre-registration is not a vaccine appointment – but it means you'll be contacted for an appointment once they start being scheduled. **Here are the risk groups currently eligible for pre-registration.**

Highest-risk group (age 16 years and up)

- Organ transplant recipients
- Hematopoietic stem cell transplant recipients
- People with neurological diseases that may compromise breathing function
- Haematological malignancy diagnosed within the last year (example leukaemia, lymphoma)
- Severe Kidney disease (eGFR < 30)

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High-risk group (age 16 years and up):

- Obesity (BMI > 40)
- Treatments causing immunosuppression (these include medications such as chemotherapy, or immune weakening medications such as hydroxychloroquine, methotrexate, prednisone, intercept, infliximab, etc.)
- Intellectual or developmental disabilities (example Down syndrome, severe intellectual disability requiring direct support in the community)
- Essential caregiver for a member of a highest risk/high risk priority group

Who can pre-register – and how to do it

To pre-register, you must be in one of the above risk groups. In addition, you must:

- Be a patient receiving care at UHN, Sinai Health, Women's College Hospital, or Toronto Grace Health Centre
- OR**
- live in, or have your primary care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) within the mid-west Toronto catchment area (South of Eglinton Avenue to the Waterfront, east of Roncesvalles Avenue, and west of Yonge Street) as defined by the Mid-West Toronto Ontario Health Team. **(Patients of Taddle Creek fall under this group)**

Pre-registration is only available if you meet the above criteria. Staff will verify your information when your vaccine appointment is booked. You will not be given an appointment if you do not meet the eligibility criteria. If you have a spouse or family member who is also eligible, they must register separately.

Here is the link to pre-register:

https://www.uhn.ca/COVID19_Vaccine/Pages/COVID19_vaccine_pre_registration.aspx#

If you prefer to pre-register by phone, you can do so by calling the Provincial Vaccine Booking Line at 1-833-943-3900 (TTY 1-866-797-0007)

Because eligibility will change, please check the most current information about who is being vaccinated in Ontario at: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/book-vaccine/>

For more information on Ontario's vaccination rollout, please refer to: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/ontarios-covid-19-vaccination-plan#phase-1>

If you live or work outside of Toronto, please check with your public health units as some regions may be at a different point in their vaccine rollout plan.

2. Do I need a letter from my physician proving highest/high-risk conditions that are listed for priority vaccination?

As per above, staff will verify your information when your vaccine appointment is booked. Proof of pre-existing illness is NOT required at time of vaccination. There is no need for a 'doctor's note' to confirm a condition.

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3. How can I book a COVID-19 vaccine appointment?

Ontario's Vaccination Registration System	Pharmacy Vaccine Locations	Toronto Hospitals and Ontario Health Teams COVID-19 Vaccination Pre-Registration and Booking Site
Eligible Ontarians age 60 and older in 2021 are able to book using the Province's registration system. This includes the City of Toronto Mass Vaccination Clinics.	Eligible Ontarians ages 55 and up can book at a participating pharmacy to get the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.	Clinics operating through this site are currently providing vaccination pre-registration or appointments to individuals based on provincial prioritization guidance.
How to book: Online at Ontario's Vaccination Registration System: https://covid-19.ontario.ca/book-vaccine/ Call the Provincial Vaccine Booking Line at 1-833-943-3900 (TTY 1-866-797-0007)	How to book: Online at https://covid-19.ontario.ca/vaccine-locations	How to book: Online at https://vaccineto.ca/sites Contact the call centre at 1-888-385-1910

4. Will Taddle Creek Family Health Team (TCFHT) be providing the COVID-19 Vaccine?

At this time TC FHT is NOT providing the COVID-19 vaccine. With vaccine supply increasing, more vaccines may be available in a wide variety of ways including in family practices across Ontario so more people can get vaccinated as quickly and equitably as possible. If TCFHT is called upon in the future to administer the COVID-19 vaccine, our patients will be notified.

5. Which vaccine should I receive?

Please take the first vaccine offered to you. They are all very effective at preventing severe disease, hospitalization and death from to COVID-19. Please note that pharmacies are providing the AstraZeneca vaccine at this time.

For more information on vaccine effectiveness and what that means in real world terms, this 7-minute video provides an excellent summary: <https://youtu.be/K3odScka55A>

6. Is the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine safe?

Health Canada, NACI and Thrombosis Canada continue to recommend AstraZeneca (in Canada we have received CovidShield) as a safe vaccine for those turning 55 in 2021 or older.

In Europe, rare cases of unusual types of blood clots have been found to occur 4-20 days after AstraZeneca vaccination. The incidence of these is exceedingly low at 1/125 000 to 1/1 000 000, the majority of the cases occurring in those under 55 years of age. This appears to be an immune-mediated reaction as they do not seem to occur in people with any risks of blood clots (family history, personal history or know clotting or bleeding problems).

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There have been no cases of these blood clots related to AstraZeneca/Covidshield in Canada.

The benefits of AstraZeneca vaccination continue to outweigh the risks. We encourage everyone to get immunized with any of the COVID-19 vaccines when they are eligible. Keep in mind that COVID-19 has killed over 15,000 Canadians so far, that about 1 in 100 Canadians who get COVID-19 end up needing intensive care, and that 1 in 5 Canadians who are hospitalized with COVID-19 develop blood clots. Currently Canada is experiencing a third wave of COVID-19 and these vaccine-related clots are very rare. The AstraZeneca vaccine has proven effective at reducing severe illness, hospitalization and death from COVID-19.

Reference:

<https://covid19-sciencetable.ca/sciencebrief/vaccine-induced-prothrombotic-immune-thrombocytopenia-vipit-following-astrazeneca-covid-19-vaccination-lay-summary/>

<https://thrombosiscanada.ca/wp-uploads/uploads/2021/04/AstraZeneca-COVID-19-Vaccine-Statement-April-2-2021-Final-ver.pdf>

7. Can a patient who received the AstraZeneca vaccine now receive the Pfizer BioNTech or Moderna as the second dose?

The safety and effectiveness of interchanging vaccines are not currently known. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends that for COVID-19 vaccines that require 2 doses, the second vaccine dose should be the same vaccine product as the first dose.

8. I have allergies, so is it safe for me to get the vaccine?

Over 3.5 million COVID-19 vaccines have been administered in Canada as of March 18, 2021. Serious adverse events and anaphylaxis are very rare with the COVID-19 vaccines, occurring in only 0.009% of doses given. Unless you have a history of allergic reaction to components of the vaccine, or to the first dose of the vaccine, Health Canada recommends vaccination.

When you receive a vaccination, it is always advised to wait at least 15 minutes after receiving a vaccine, since an allergic reaction or anaphylaxis is possible. For those with a history of allergies, even to food, pets or other non-medical causes, waiting 30 minutes after receiving a vaccine is recommended.

By clicking the vaccine name below you can review the vaccine ingredients in non-medical terms and [learn more about polyethylene glycol](#).

[Pfizer-BioNTech](#)

[Moderna](#)

[AstraZeneca](#)

[Johnson & Johnson](#)

Reference:

Centre for Effective Practice: <https://tools.cep.health/tool/covid-19-vaccines/#allergicreaction>

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9. Can I receive other vaccines at the same time as the COVID-19 vaccine?

A waiting period before and after receiving another type of vaccine is recommended so that any side effects from one vaccine are not confused with side effects of another. The recommendation is to wait at least 14 days after receiving another vaccine before receiving the COVID-19 vaccine, and at least 28 days after receiving each COVID-19 vaccine dose before receiving another vaccine based on recommendations from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI).

10. Why do I need to wait 16 weeks or 4 months between COVID-19 Vaccine Doses

The 16-week interval between doses is intended to protect more Ontarians, more quickly. Due to limited supply, for the vast majority of people, second doses for the 2-dose vaccines in Canada have now been prolonged to a maximum of 16 weeks to ensure more people can receive the first dose of the vaccine. This decision was made by Canada's Chief Medical Officer of Health based on recommendations from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI).

11. Can I take medication for pain after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine injection?

Side effects such as shoulder pain or fever are generally mild and should only last a few days. Applying a cool damp cloth where the vaccine was given may help with soreness.

If needed, you may use over-the-counter medicine such as ibuprofen, acetaminophen, acetylsalicylic acid (ASA), or antihistamines for any pain and discomfort you may experience after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine, if you have no other medical reasons that prevent you from taking these medications. It is not recommended to take these medications before vaccination for the purpose of trying to prevent side effects.

12. How long after having had COVID-19 can one get the vaccine?

While there is not a mandatory waiting period between having COVID-19 disease and being immunized, it is recommended that people wait until they are feeling better, with no symptoms of a new illness (such as recent fever or cough).

Additionally, symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals who have been advised to self-isolate due to suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection or due to close contact with a COVID-19 case should not attend a vaccine clinic and should wait to get their vaccine until their isolation period is over.

Reference:

https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/vaccine/COVID-19_vaccine_info_sheet.pdf

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/national-advisory-committee-on-immunization-naci/recommendations-use-covid-19-vaccines.html>

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13. Should a patient who had COVID-19 previously still receive the full course of the two-dose vaccine (versus a single dose only)?

For now, those who have previously had COVID should get a full course of the vaccine. It is still uncertain how long protection or immunity against the COVID-19 virus will last in these individuals.

14. Does the vaccine stop transmission of the virus? Can vaccinated people get together with others who are vaccinated?

Although the vaccine will protect you, at this time it hasn't been proven that getting vaccinated will stop you from carrying the virus and possibly infecting others. Given the current evidence, after vaccination one should continue to follow all public health measures, including physical distancing, wearing a mask and hand hygiene. Socializing with people in other households is still discouraged for now.

15. How long does the protection conferred by the vaccine(s) last?

Because the vaccines are relatively new, we don't know for sure how long the vaccines are protective and whether/when a booster may be needed. Information is being collected now in real time and research is ongoing to determine how long immunogenicity lasts.

16. What is the latest on vaccines for pregnant women?

Pregnant women were not part of the clinical trials for the vaccines. The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada has stated the vaccine should be offered to pregnant women: "the documented risk of not getting the COVID-19 vaccine outweighs the theorized and undescribed risk of being vaccinated during pregnancy or while breastfeeding". Pregnancy is among the "at risk" health conditions listed for priority vaccination in the latest vaccine rollout plan.

In summary, the vaccines are safe and effective. We will continue to monitor the vaccine rollout and provide you with the most relevant science-based information as soon as we have it available to us.

Please remember, our healthcare professionals and offices remain accessible to you by phone or in person visits (if deemed necessary). Thank you all for what you have done to keep yourselves, your loved ones, and your communities safe.