

## COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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

Reviewed By: Exec. Dir./Lead Physicians

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 22, 2021**

### 1. Who can receive the COVID-19 vaccine and how can I book?

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:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Where you can access your vaccine</b>
Adults age 18 or older who live in COVID-19 hot spot postal codes (see below)	Ontario Health Teams and hospital mobile clinics and pop-ups to be announced at a later date.
Adults aged 40 and older who are accessing the AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD vaccine	<a href="#">Pharmacies</a>
Adults age 50 or older who live in COVID-19 hot spot postal codes (see below)	<a href="#">City Immunization Clinics</a> and some <a href="#">Hospital Immunization Clinics</a> are also booking appointments for adults aged 50 and older who live in hot spot postal codes. Please review the eligibility criteria for each hospital site.
Adults aged 60 and older (born in 1961 and earlier)	<a href="#">City Immunization Clinics</a> and <a href="#">Hospital Immunization Clinics</a> and some health partner clinics  Call the Provincial Vaccine Information Line at 1-888-999-6488
Residents, staff and essential caregivers in long-term care homes	Residents are being vaccinated in their homes, at hospitals and other points of care. Essential caregivers and staff may be vaccinated alongside residents or invited to nearby hospital clinics.
Residents, staff and essential caregivers in congregate living settings for seniors, including high-risk retirement homes	Residents are being vaccinated in their homes. Essential caregivers and staff may be vaccinated alongside residents or invited to nearby hospital clinics.  Mobile teams are being deployed to congregate care sites from Ontario Health teams.

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<b>Group</b>	<b>Where you can access your vaccine</b>
Residents and staff in other congregate care settings for seniors, including all other retirement homes and assisted living	Residents are being vaccinated in their homes. Essential caregivers and staff may be vaccinated alongside residents or invited to nearby hospital clinics.
Frontline health care workers in <a href="#">all risk groups</a>	<a href="#">Hospital Immunization Clinics</a> OR Contact the call centre at 1-888-385-1910
Adults who are receiving ongoing home care	<a href="#">Hospital Immunization Clinics</a> and home visits for homebound clients OR Contact the call centre at 1-888-385-1910
Adults in First Nations, Métis and Inuit populations	<a href="#">Hospital Immunization Clinics</a> and Indigenous-led clinics and mobile teams OR Contact the call centre at 1-888-385-1910
People experiencing homelessness staying in shelters at high-risk of outbreaks (on a rolling basis, to be identified by Toronto Public Health and based on vaccine supply and other prioritization criteria)	Mobile teams organized by Ontario Health Teams
Faith leaders who as part of their regular role are at increased risk of exposure to COVID-19 through close contact with persons and families in the following circumstances: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• End of life care</li><li>• Care of the deceased, funerals, bathing, or other ceremony with direct contact with deceased persons</li><li>• Home visits to unwell persons</li><li>• Pastoral care in hospitals/LTCHs/RHS or other vulnerable settings</li></ul>	<a href="#">Hospital Immunization Clinics</a> OR Contact the call centre at 1-888-385-1910
People with the following highest-risk health conditions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Organ transplant recipients;</li><li>• Hematopoietic stem cell transplant recipients;</li></ul>	<a href="#">Hospital Immunization Clinics</a> OR Contact the call centre at 1-888-385-1910

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<b>Group</b>	<b>Where you can access your vaccine</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• People with neurological diseases in which respiratory function may be compromised (e.g., motor neuron disease, myasthenia gravis, multiple sclerosis);</li><li>• Haematological malignancy diagnosed less than one year ago;</li><li>• Sickle cell disease;</li><li>• Kidney disease eGFR &lt; 30; and</li><li>• One essential caregiver for individuals in the groups listed above.</li></ul>	
<p>People with the following <a href="#">high risk</a> health conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Obesity (BMI &gt; 40)</li><li>• Other treatments causing immunosuppression (e.g., chemotherapy, immunity weakening medications)</li><li>• Intellectual or developmental disabilities (e.g., Down Syndrome)</li></ul> <p>One essential caregiver is eligible for vaccination for individuals in this group listed above. The caregiver provides regular and sustained assistance with personal care and/or activities of daily living.</p>	<p><a href="#">Hospital Immunization Clinics</a> OR Contact the call centre at 1-888-385-1910</p>
<p>People who live and work in high-risk congregate care settings not included in Phase 1 (e.g. supportive housing), including shelters, respites and encampments</p>	<p>People who live or work in these settings may receive their vaccine at the setting or may be eligible to receive their vaccine at one of the <a href="#">Hospital Immunization Clinics</a>. Please review the eligibility criteria for each hospital site. OR Contact the call centre at 1-888-385-1910</p>
<p>Elementary and secondary education workers who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work in a COVID-19 hotspot in Toronto (see postal codes below).</li></ul>	<p>Eligible education workers can book by calling the Provincial Vaccine Information Line at 1-888-999-6488. You cannot book online.</p>

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<b>Group</b>	<b>Where you can access your vaccine</b>
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Education workers in this group will require a letter from their school or school board;

- Support students with special education needs. Education workers in this group will require a letter from their school or school board; or
- Live in a Toronto hot spot (see postal codes below). Education workers in this group will have to provide proof of residency at an address in the hot spot and proof of education employment (e.g. pay stub).

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### **COVID-19 hot spot postal codes:**

Hot spot areas are neighbourhoods identified by the Province of Ontario with ongoing and historic high rates of COVID-19 transmission, hospitalization and death. These areas were also identified by the province to have populations with higher risk factors including racialization, income, quality of housing, immigration status and education attainment.

The Province has identified these priority areas for increased vaccination efforts by first half of postal codes for those who are 50 years or older (born in 1971 or earlier). Fifty-three areas in Toronto are COVID-19 hot spots:

- |       |       |       |
|-------|-------|-------|
| • M1B | • M2R | • M6E |
| • M1C | • M3A | • M6H |
| • M1E | • M3C | • M6K |
| • M1G | • M3H | • M6L |
| • M1H | • M3J | • M6M |
| • M1J | • M3K | • M6N |
| • M1K | • M3L | • M8V |
| • M1L | • M3M | • M9A |
| • M1M | • M3N | • M9B |
| • M1P | • M4A | • M9C |
| • M1R | • M4H | • M9L |
| • M1S | • M4X | • M9M |
| • M1T | • M5A | • M9N |
| • M1V | • M5B | • M9P |
| • M1W | • M5N | • M9R |
| • M1X | • M5V | • M9V |
| • M2J | • M6A | • M9W |
| • M2M | • M6B |       |

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### **Pre-Registration:**

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.**

- First Nations, Métis and Inuit Adults
- Recipient of Chronic Home Care
- Faith Leaders
- Organ transplant recipients
- Hematopoietic stem cell transplant recipients
- People with neurological diseases that may compromise respiratory function
- Haematological malignancy diagnosed < 1 year
- Kidney disease eGFR < 30
- Obesity (BMI > 40)
- Other treatments causing immunosuppression
- Intellectual or developmental disabilities
- Essential caregiver for a member of a priority group
- Immune deficiencies/autoimmune disorders
- Stroke/cerebrovascular disease
- Dementia
- Diabetes
- Liver disease
- All other cancers
- Respiratory diseases
- Spleen problems (e.g. asplenia)
- Heart disease
- Hypertension with end organ damage
- Diagnosis of mental disorders
- Sickle Cell Disease
- Substance use disorders
- Thalassemia
- Pregnancy
- Immunocompromising health conditions
- Other disabilities requiring direct support care in the community
- Age 50+ with postal code starting with M5V, M6E, M6H

### **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:

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- 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://covidvaccine.uhn.ca/vaccination-registration-form>

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)

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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 the most current information specific to the Toronto Public Health Unit please visit:

<https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-protect-yourself-others/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-how-to-get-vaccinated/>

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.

You can find your Public Health Unit here: <https://www.phdapps.health.gov.on.ca/phulocator/>

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

### **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.

### **3. 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.

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### **4. 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 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>

### **5. 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 known clotting or bleeding problems).

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>

### **6. 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.

### **7. 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.

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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>

### **8. 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).

### **9. 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).

### **10. 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.

### **11. 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).

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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.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>

### **12. 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.

### **13. 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.

### **14. 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.

### **15. 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 and is now eligible for pre-registration at some Toronto Hospitals and Ontario Health Teams (see Question 1 for more details).

Pregnant individuals that have their second dose scheduled on or after your expected date of delivery. You may move your appointment up to 1 month prior to your expected date of delivery. You may book the appointment at <https://forms.uhn.ca/PublicForms/Form/VcACR> Please note

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*you will be asked to provide a note from your primary care provider to be presented at your second dose appointment.*

### **16. When will the Johnson and Johnson Covid-19 Vaccine be available and what are the risks associated it?**

While the Johnson and Johnson vaccine has been approved in Canada since March 5th, the latest reports state that 300,000 doses will arrive in Canada during the last week of April. The province has not announced where these vaccines will be available as of yet.

In general, the side effects are similar to what you might have with other vaccines and are mild to moderate. Common side effects include pain at the site of injection, body chills, feeling tired and feeling feverish.

Similarly to the AstraZeneca vaccine, there have been reports of extremely rare blood clots being reported within 13 days after receiving the Johnson and Johnson Covid-19 vaccine. In the U.S. there have been six very rare blood clot cases among nearly 7 million doses administered. Health Canada has ensured that the benefits continue to outweigh the risks at this time.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/covid19-industry/drugs-vaccines-treatments/vaccines/janssen.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/JJUpdate.html>

### **17. Can I receive my 2nd dose earlier if I am a higher risk individual?**

Some hospitals such as UHN, are providing the 2<sup>nd</sup> COVID dose earlier for higher risk individuals meeting the follow criteria:

- Only the following groups of people have special approval from the Ministry of Health to receive the second dose in less than 16 weeks:
  - those who received a solid organ transplant
  - those who received a stem cell transplant
  - those getting chemotherapy, immunotherapy or targeted therapy treatment for cancer.
- Important: Please ask your healthcare provider for a letter confirming your medical condition. You must bring this letter to the second dose appointment.
- People getting radiation or hormonal treatment for cancer do not have special approval and will get the second dose up to 16 weeks after the first dose.
- At this time we will only accommodate requests for second dose appointment changes for the following reasons:
  - Essential work related travel to a region that does not offer the vaccine and you will not have returned within the 4 month interval.
  - Patient who has received solid organ or stem cell transplant, and/or stable patient undergoing active treatment for cancer (getting chemotherapy, immunotherapy or targeted therapy treatment for cancer).

*Please note you will be asked to provide a note from your primary care provider to be presented at your second dose appointment.*

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- Pregnant individual, with your second dose scheduled on or after your expected date of delivery. You may move your appointment up to 1 month prior to your expected date of delivery.

If you are eligible for an earlier 2<sup>nd</sup> dose, you may book your appointment at

<https://forms.uhn.ca/PublicForms/Form/VcACR>

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.