

# Updated: Questions and Answers for Patients: COVID-19 Vaccine Immunization through Ontario Pharmacies

This Questions and Answers document provides information to patients on the availability of COVID-19 Vaccine Immunization through Ontario pharmacies.

**Effective March 10, 2021**, the Government of Ontario is publicly funding COVID-19 vaccines for immunization at participating pharmacies in Ontario.

## 1. Who can get a COVID-19 vaccine at a pharmacy?

Individuals in Ontario may be eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine at a participating pharmacy. Eligibility criteria is expected to change as COVID-19 vaccine supply becomes available.

Please refer to the [ministry website](#) for the most recent Executive Officer Notice entitled “Administration of the Publicly Funded COVID-19 Vaccines in Ontario Pharmacies – Eligibility”.

## 2. How do I know if I belong to a priority group targeted for COVID-19 vaccination?

Priority populations are identified based on current public health guidelines and considerations and may change as the pandemic situation evolves. Please contact your local [public health unit](#) and visit the ministry’s website [COVID-19 vaccines for Ontario | COVID-19 \(coronavirus\) in Ontario](#) for up-to-date information on who is eligible.

Please also access the Ontario Government [website](#) for updates to the provincial rollout and population priority groups.

## 3. Which pharmacy can provide me with the COVID-19 vaccine?

You can locate a participating pharmacy at [this link](#).

Please call ahead to the pharmacy to find out their booking procedures as some pharmacies may only administer vaccines by pre-booked appointment; while other pharmacies may choose to offer walk-in appointments.

## 4. What do I need to bring with me to the pharmacy to get my COVID-19 vaccine?

When you go to the pharmacy, you should provide a valid Ontario health card number. If you do not have an Ontario health card number, you may still receive a publicly funded COVID-19 vaccine using an alternate identification and providing your date of birth and contact information to the pharmacy.

Other forms of patient identification may include:

- Birth Certificate
- First Nations ID
- Passport
- MRN (Medical Record Number)
- Out of Province ID
- Driver's Licence

If arriving to the pharmacy for your second dose, it is recommended that you bring your Ministry of Health COVID-19 vaccine receipt that you would have received after receiving your first dose.

#### **5. Which COVID-19 vaccine is being offered at pharmacies?**

For the publicly funded COVID-19 vaccine immunization, pharmacists will be providing the COVID-19 vaccine that is available according to the provincial vaccine rollout plan.

For more information about COVID-19 vaccines, please refer to Public Health Ontario's website at this [link](#).

#### **6. Are pharmacists prepared to provide COVID-19 vaccines? What quality standards will be followed?**

Pharmacists, registered pharmacy students, interns and pharmacy technicians are authorized to administer the COVID-19 vaccine provided they have the appropriate injection training, have registered this training with the Ontario College of Pharmacists (OCP), and are working at a pharmacy that has entered into an agreement with the Ministry of Health to provide COVID-19 vaccines.

#### **7. What happens before and after the vaccination at the pharmacy?**

The pharmacist will provide details on the process before the COVID-19 vaccine immunization begins, as well as answer any other questions you may have.

Patients, or their substitute decision-makers, will be required to provide consent for the COVID-19 vaccine administration and related data collection. Pharmacy staff will provide you with written vaccine information and after-care instructions as well as a written receipt with the pharmacy contact information that you received the vaccine, including a scheduled time and date and instructions for your second dose, if applicable, a pharmacy may also provide an electronic receipt containing this information .

**Individuals must keep their receipt for their vaccination in a safe place and bring it to their appointment for the second dose of the vaccine.**

Patients are asked to wait for 15 minutes after receiving their vaccine to ensure they are feeling well. Longer waiting times of 30 minutes may be recommended if there is a concern about a possible vaccine allergy.

Individuals are advised to continue to follow the recommendation of public health officials to prevent the spread of COVID-19, which include wearing a mask, staying at least 2 meters from others and limiting/avoiding contact with others outside their household.

#### **8. What happens after receiving the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine?**

After the first dose, the pharmacy will schedule an appointment for your second dose. Individuals are strongly advised to return to the same pharmacy location for their second dose and follow the instructions provided by their pharmacist to ensure they receive the second dose at the right time. The pharmacy will contact you should there be a need to reschedule the appointment for reasons such as vaccine supply.

- Individuals who received an mRNA vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna) may be directed to return 4 to 16 weeks after receiving the first dose.
- Individuals who received the AstraZeneca / COVISHIELD vaccine may be directed to return 12 to 16 weeks after receiving the first dose.

#### **9. What if I cannot make it on the day of my scheduled second dose?**

If you need to reschedule the arrangements made for the second dose, please contact the pharmacy as soon as possible for scheduling an alternate day/time.

The pharmacy staff is required to schedule the second dose (if applicable) and give you instructions on how you can reach them, as well as how they will reach you should there be a need to reschedule due to issues such as vaccine supply.

#### **10. My first dose was an AstraZeneca vaccine which is no longer available for first dose administration. What should I do about my second dose?**

If your first dose was the AstraZeneca or COVISHIELD vaccine at the pharmacy, please contact the pharmacy for information on your second dose.

Based on the guidance provided by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, those individuals who received their first dose of the AstraZeneca / COVISHIELD COVID-19 vaccine during the period of March 10<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> are eligible to receive a second dose of the same vaccine earlier than 12 weeks if they so choose.

Individuals who received their first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine from March 20 onwards will be eligible to receive a second dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine from May 31 onwards at an interval of at least 12 weeks, with appointment dates based on the timing of their first dose.

Pharmacists are encouraged to adopt a “first-in-first-out” policy when administering second doses that reflects when patients received their first dose. For example, if Individual “A” received their first dose before Individual “B”, then Individual “A” should receive their second dose before Individual “B”.

### **11. Can I receive another COVID-19 vaccine as my second dose?**

At this time, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) is not recommending that vaccines of different types (e.g., mRNA vaccine and viral vector vaccine) be used in the same series as data on the immune response following mixed vaccine schedules are not currently available. However, a clinical trial is underway that is addressing this question with final results anticipated to be available in June 2021.

In collaboration with health experts at Public Health Ontario, the Science Advisory Table and the federal, provincial and territorial partners, the government is reviewing the data to consider options for the use of the AstraZeneca / COVISHIELD vaccine or an mRNA vaccine for second doses where a different vaccine was administered for a first dose. More information will be provided in the near future.

### **12. What should I do about my second dose if my first dose was Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine or COVID-19 vaccine MODERNA?**

As per the May 28, 2021 Ministry [announcement](#), individuals who received their first dose of either Pfizer or Moderna may see an accelerated interval for receiving their second dose. Please contact your pharmacy for further information.

The following is an anticipated schedule for eligibility to book a second dose appointment based on confirmed supply.

- **As of May 31:** individuals aged 80+, if at least 4 weeks have passed since their first dose.
- **As of June 14:** individuals aged 70+, if at least 4 weeks have passed since their first dose.
- **As of June 28:** individuals who received their first dose during the period of March 8 to April 18. For example, this included individuals with the highest-risk health conditions and special education workers.
- **As of July 19:** individuals who received their first dose during the period of April 19 to May 9. For example, this included individuals aged 50 and over, as well as individuals with high-risk health conditions.
- **As of August 2:** individuals who received their first dose during the period of May 10 to May 30. For example, this included individuals who cannot work from home and individuals who have at-risk health conditions.
- **As of August 9:** all other individuals (including those aged 12 to 25 years) who received their first dose from May 31 onwards, if at least 4 weeks have passed since their first dose.

Pharmacists are encouraged to adopt a “first-in-first-out” policy when administering second doses that reflects when patients received their first dose. For example, if Individual “A”

received their first dose before Individual “B”, then Individual “A” should receive their second dose before Individual “B”.

### **13. Am I able to re-schedule my second dose based on the May 28, 2021 Ministry announcement about accelerating second doses?**

Yes. Individuals that are eligible for an accelerated second dose may wish to contact their pharmacy at a time that is closer to the anticipated eligibility date according to their age/timing of their first dose (see eligibility dates in Question 12 above), where they received their first dose to book (or re-book) an appointment for their second dose. Or, individuals may access the [provincial booking system](#) to search for another pharmacy that is offering the specific vaccine for their second dose. Second doses can also be booked (without a first appointment) in the provincial booking system.

If individuals are booking an appointment at a different pharmacy, they are reminded to cancel any previously scheduled doses that they may have already booked either with the other pharmacy or through the provincial booking system.

Note: Ontario has already begun offering second doses of COVID-19 vaccines at a shortened interval to certain groups, including [high-risk health care workers](#), individuals with certain health conditions and First Nations, Inuit and Métis individuals<sup>1</sup>.

### **14. Where can I get more information?**

For more information related to COVID-19 and the service of vaccine immunization, talk to your health care provider or visit the following webpages:

**COVID-19 vaccines for Ontario:** <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccines-ontario>

**COVID-19 vaccine information:** [www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/novel-coronavirus/vaccines](http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/novel-coronavirus/vaccines)

**COVID-19 Resources:** [www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/novel-coronavirus/public-resources](http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/novel-coronavirus/public-resources)

---

<sup>1</sup> Please refer to COVID-19 vaccine relevant information and Guidance documents at this [website](#).