

COVID-19 at Holland Bloorview - Links and FAQ

Common questions about the COVID-19 vaccine

This document contains key links and answers to common questions regarding COVID-19 vaccination. For information specific to vaccination at Holland Bloorview, please see the *Staff Vaccine FAQ*. If you have additional questions, please speak to your manager or email covid19@hollandbloorview.ca.

Key links:

[Recommendations on the use of COVID-19 Vaccines \(NEW\)](#)
[COVID-19 information for healthcare workers](#)
[SOGC statement on COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy](#)
[Information about the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine](#)
[Information about the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine](#)
[COVID-19 information for health professionals \(Government of Canada\)](#)
[The Centre for Effective Practice's COVID-19 information hub](#)
[Ontario's vaccine distribution plan](#)
[COVID-19 vaccine safety \(Government of Ontario\)](#)

There has been lots of discussion in the news about postponing the second dose of vaccinations. Are there negative side effects to doing this? Will it make the vaccine less effective? (NEW)

The information on this topic is still developing. The second dose enables the immune system to provide long-lasting protection. Doctors strongly advise getting both shots, in the recommended time frame of 3 weeks. There isn't yet enough data to say definitively how much protection and how long it lasts with only one shot. [Source](#).

Additional information from the Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunization:

- While efforts should be made to vaccinate according to the recommended schedules, some jurisdictions considering vaccine delivery logistics, current epidemiological status and projections, and healthcare system capacity may maximize the number of individuals benefiting from a first dose of vaccine by delaying the second dose, until further supplies of the vaccine become available, preferably within 42 days of receipt of the first dose.
- Efficacy analyses in the Pfizer-BioNTech clinical trial included participants that received their second dose within 19-42 days after their first dose, and the majority of participants in the Moderna clinical trial received their second dose between 21 to 42 days after the first.
- **The immune response of a delayed second dose for the authorized vaccines is unknown.**
- With vaccines for other vaccine preventable diseases, immune response is either similar or improved when the second dose is administered after a longer interval.
- Principles of immunology, vaccine science, and historical examples demonstrate that delays between doses do not result in a reduction in final antibody concentrations nor a reduction in durability of memory response for most multi-dose products.

Additional information from the World Health Organization (WHO):

- Countries experiencing exceptional epidemiological circumstances may consider delaying for a short period the administration of the second dose as a pragmatic approach to maximizing the number of individuals benefiting from a first dose while vaccine supply continues to increase. WHO's recommendation at present is that the interval between doses may be extended up to 42 days on the basis of currently available clinical trial data.

What is the duration of immunity? (NEW)

The information on this is still developing. What we do know is that studies have shown that the vaccine reduces the risk of contracting COVID-19 by 95% after receiving both doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 mRNA vaccine. Studies are ongoing to determine how long immunity lasts.

Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe?

Yes. The vaccines are safe and authorized by Health Canada. The vaccines' safety and efficacy was decided only after a rigorous review that included examining scientific and medical evidence.

Can I get the vaccine if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?

People who are pregnant or breastfeeding and part of a group advised to receive the vaccine may choose to be vaccinated. If you have questions about receiving the COVID-19 vaccine, please contact your primary care provider to help you make an informed decision. If you fall into these categories, at the time of vaccination you will be required to indicate via consent form that you have had a discussion with your primary care provider. The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC), together with the Canadian Fertility & Andrology Society (CFSA)'s statement on vaccination during pregnancy can be read [here](#).

Are there side effects?

To date, no serious adverse effects have been identified with the vaccines approved for use in Canada (Source: [Government of Ontario](#)). Side effects observed during clinical trials were mild or moderate and included pain at the site of injection, fatigue, headache and feeling feverish. Less often, people have experienced enlarged lymph nodes (1 in 100). Allergic reactions can happen, especially if someone has a history of a severe allergy.

How were the COVID-19 vaccines developed and produced so quickly?

Both the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines, the two vaccines authorized for use in Canada, went through Health Canada's typical rigorous review process. The review of the vaccines was made top priority and moved to the "front of the line" –this significantly shortened this stage of the process. The vaccine development process was reduced because of the unprecedented amount of global scientific resources mobilized to end the COVID-19 pandemic.

Why should I get the vaccine?

The vaccine reduces the risk of contracting COVID-19 by 95% after receiving both doses. Getting the vaccine will help you protect your family, friends, Holland Bloorview clients and yourself. Many staff at Holland Bloorview qualify as part of a priority high-risk group according to Health Canada: *"Health care workers who have direct contact with patients, including those who work in health care settings and personal support workers."*

Can I get COVID-19 from the vaccination?

No, the vaccine does not contain live virus and you cannot get COVID-19 as the result of receiving the vaccination.

Could I still be contagious even if I get vaccinated?

The information on this is still developing. Right now, we know that the vaccines protect most vaccinated people from getting sick with COVID-19, and that those who do get sick appear to get a milder case. Studies are ongoing as to how the vaccine affects how contagious infected people are. It is important to continue public health measures of distancing and masking even after vaccination, until scientific experts say it is safe to stop.

I just had the TB test or another vaccination, can I still get the vaccine?

We recommend waiting two weeks after receiving another vaccine or completing a TB test prior to getting the COVID19 vaccine. If you need to get another vaccine or TB test and have started the COVID19 vaccination series, we would recommend waiting until 2 weeks after the second dose of the COVID19 vaccine prior to getting another vaccine or TB test.

Is it safe to get the vaccine if you are immunocompromised or have recently completed radiation therapy?

If you are immunocompromised or have undergone a recent medical treatments, such as radiation therapy, please contact your health-care provider to help you make an informed decision.

Can my DNA be altered by the mRNA technology in the vaccine?

mRNA technology cannot alter your DNA. RNA can be made from DNA, but not the other way around. mRNA vaccines contain the genetic “recipe” to make a protein that will trigger an immune response to help protect you from COVID-19.