Municipality of Chatham-Kent
CK Public Health
Reach out for more information
Tel: 519.355.1071 x 1900 Email: covid19@chatham-kent.ca
Website: www.ckphu.com/covid-19-vaccine

Version 3. Last Updated February 21, 2021

COVID-19 Vaccine: Frequently Asked Questions

The information regarding COVID-19 vaccines is rapidly changing. The most up to date information can be found on our webpage at https://ckphu.com/covid-19-vaccine/.

1. How does a vaccine work?

Vaccines work by training your body's immune system to recognize and fight a virus that causes a disease. To do this, a vaccine triggers an immune response by introducing parts of the virus into the body through vaccination.

By injecting a vaccine, your immune system safely learns to:

- recognize a virus
- produce antibodies to fight the virus
- remember the virus for the future

If the virus reappears, your immune system will recognize it and attack them before it can develop and cause sickness.

2. Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe?

Creating a new vaccine typically takes years. However, the progress on COVID-19 vaccines is happening quickly for many reasons, including:

- being informed by decades of research on other strains of coronavirus prior to COVID-19, such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Sars-CoV (SARS)
- advances in science and technology
- international collaboration among scientists, health professionals, researchers, industry and governments
- increased dedicated funding

Before any vaccines are available in Ontario, they:

- undergo rigorous clinical trials to ensure they are safe and effective
- are evaluated and authorized for use by Health Canada, using rigorous standards

Ontario's plan to make sure vaccines remain safe for Ontarians includes:

- securely and safely transporting and storing vaccines at required conditions and temperatures

- establishing safe clinic spaces to give people immunizations, including providing the required training to those administering vaccines
- monitoring for any adverse reactions or side effects that may occur after vaccination and taking appropriate measures

Health Canada will continue to monitor all authorized vaccines to ensure they continue to be safe and effective.

3. What is an mRNA vaccine and are the vaccines that we are receiving mRNA?

Both the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines use messenger RNA (mRNA) that tells the cells in our body to make a protein that is found specifically on the virus that causes COVID-19. These proteins are known as "spike proteins". These spike proteins, although harmless to us, will be recognized by the body as being a foreign invader and will trigger our immune system to start making antibodies. Our new antibodies will help to protect us from becoming sick if we are exposed to the virus.

The vaccine does not contain the virus and so it cannot give us COVID-19.

mRNA vaccines:

- Do not enter the part of the cell where our DNA is stored.
- The cell breaks down and destroys the mRNA after the spike protein is created.
- mRNA vaccines do not use the live virus that causes COVID-19.

4. Why should I get vaccinated?

COVID-19 can be a serious illness for many people and for some people, symptoms can last for months. Those people are called long haulers. The virus can even damage the heart, brain, lungs and increase the risk of long-term health problems. Even young, healthy people can feel unwell for weeks to months following the COVID-19 infection.

The short-term side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine are less than the risk and potential long-term health damages caused by the COVID-19 virus.

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5. How is it being determined who gets the vaccine and when?

The Province of Ontario has outlined a phased approach to who gets the vaccine and when. This process is based on an Ethical Framework for COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution, and guided by a provincial COVID-19 vaccine implementation plan:

Chatham-Kent COVID-19 Vaccination Phases

'All Paths Lead to Success'

Phase 1: A Jan – Mar 2021	Phase 1: B Mar – Apr 2021	Phase 2 Apr – Jun 2021	Phase 3 Jun – Aug 2021
High-Risk Population *Public Health Leading*		**General Population** *Primary Care & Pharmacy Support*	
• Residents, staff, and essential caregivers of long-term care, high-risk retirement and First Nations elder care homes • Alternative level of care patients in hospitals • Highest Priority and Very High Priority health care workers, in accordance with Ministry of Health guidance	• Adults 80+ • Other staff, residents and caregivers in retirement homes and other congregate care settings for seniors • High Priority health care workers, in accordance with Ministry of Health guidance • Adult recipients of chronic home care • Indigenous adults	• People aged 79 to 60 in 5-year increments • People aged 59 to 16 who are clinically extremely vulnerable • Other risk groups not identified for Phase 1	• Remaining population aged 59 to 16 not yet immunized
All vaccines received will be administered except doses required for boosting prior to the next vaccine shipment. Populations in Phase 1 (A and B) will be immunized in parallel as vaccine supplies permit.			
This plan is subject to change based on vaccine availability and provincial directive.			

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6. What is the shot like?

The vaccine is provided in 2 doses by a needle in the upper arm. When the vaccine becomes available to you, you will get one shot. You will get your second shot 3-4 weeks after – instructions will be provided to you at the time you receive your first dose.

7. How effective is the vaccine?

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is 95% effective in preventing COVID-19. This effectiveness begins about 1 week after the second dose.

The Moderna vaccine is 94% effective in preventing COVID-19. This effectiveness begins about 2 weeks after the second dose.

8. Can people under the age of 18 get vaccinated for COVID-19?

Health Canada has approved the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine for people 16 years of age and older and the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine for people 18 years of age and older. People who are younger than the approved ages should not be offered the COVID-19 vaccine as the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine has not yet been established for those age groups. As more vaccines are approved, and more research is

conducted on these vaccines, there may be an opportunity for those under 16 to be vaccinated in the future.

9. What are the side effects and risk from the COVID-19 vaccines?

Most of the side effects for the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines are mild to moderate and will resolve after a few days. The side effects that have been reported for both vaccines include:

Very Common ≥10% (more than 1 in 10 doses)	**Common 1%-10%** (1 in 100 to 1 in 10 doses)	**Uncommon 1%** (1 in 100 doses)	**Very Rare**
• pain at the injection site • headache • feeling tired • muscle or joint pain • fever or chills • swelling or tenderness under the armpit (only for the Moderna vaccine)	• redness & swelling at the injection site • nausea & vomiting (only for the Moderna vaccine)	enlarged lymph nodes	serious allergic reactions such as anaphylaxis

In very rare cases, the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine and Moderna COVID-19 vaccine could cause serious allergic reactions (anaphylaxis). A serious allergic reaction would usually occur shortly after receiving a dose of either vaccine. You will be asked to stay 15 minutes after getting your shot so you can be monitored for a severe reaction.

Signs of a serious allergic reaction include, but are not limited to:

- trouble breathing
- swelling of the face and throat
- hives (a bad rash all over your body)
- a fast heartbeat
- dizziness and weakness

If you experience side effects, call your health care provider or public health to seek medical advice. Vaccine side effects will continue to be monitored as people receive the vaccine. Public health will keep track of the reported side effects to make sure the vaccine continues to be safe.

Even if you experience mild side effects, it is important to receive the second dose. You may get the same side effects with your second dose.

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10. Who should not get the vaccine?

You should not get vaccinated if you:

- have any allergies to the vaccine ingredients, including polyethylene glycol (PEG)
- have had a severe allergic reaction after the first dose of the vaccine

You should talk to your health care provider if:

- Under 16 years of age for the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine, and 18 years of age for the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine
- Are pregnant or breastfeeding
- Immunosuppressed due to disease or treatment or suffering from autoimmune disorder

You should wait to get the vaccine if you have a fever, are sick with COVID-19 or have received a different vaccine in the past 14 days.

11. What happens after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine?

COVID-19 vaccines have been found to be about 95% effective in clinical trials, this means that some people may still get COVID-19 even after they are vaccinated. There are a number of reasons for this including:

- Building up immunity takes time – two doses of the vaccine are needed for your body to have maximum protection against COVID-19, however that protection is not immediate. Someone that comes into contact with the virus just before or after receiving both doses of the vaccine, may still get COVID-19 since they will not have the time to build up their immunity.
- We don't yet know what level of immunity in the population is needed to achieve community immunity.

All of this means that we need to continue to wash our hands, stay home when sick, maintain physical distancing, wear a face mask as appropriate, cover your coughs and sneezes and avoid touching your face.

12. Can I get COVID-19 from the vaccine?

No, the COVID-19 vaccine will not make you sick. The vaccines use mRNA technology and do not contain any of the live virus responsible for causing COVID-19. However, if you come into contact with the virus just before or after receiving the two dose series of the vaccine, you may get COVID-19.

13. If I had a reaction to a different vaccine in the past, can I still get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Check with your doctor or health care provider if you have had a serious allergic reaction to a vaccine in the past. They will look at your medical records and help you make the decision.

14. **If I tested positive for COVID-19 in the past, should I still get the vaccine?**
    Yes. You will have some immunity from your infection, but no-one knows how long it will last. There are cases where people have gotten COVID-19 again before they could get vaccinated. You should not get the vaccine if you are sick or have COVID-19 right now. Wait until you are better to get the shot.

15. **I just got vaccinated for something else. Can I still get the COVID-19 vaccine now?**
    You should wait 14 days before receiving the COVID-19 vaccine if you have had another type of vaccine.

    After receiving your second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, you should not receive any other vaccines for 28 days. If for some reason you need another vaccine within 28 days, discuss this with your doctor or health care provider.

16. **Will the COVID-19 vaccine change my DNA?**
    No, the vaccine cannot change your DNA in any way. The mRNA does not enter the part of your cell where your DNA is stored.

17. **What happens if people wait to get the vaccine?**
    If you are eligible to receive the vaccine and you wait to get it, it may take longer for you to get it when you want it. Getting the first dose as soon as you are eligible, will give you protection while COVID-19 cases are still active in the community.

18. **I have heard there are new strains of the COVID-19 virus. Is there information about the effectiveness of the existing vaccine on the new strain?**
    Currently, experts believe the vaccine will work with the new strain. There is no evidence to suggest that the vaccine will not be effective against the new strain, however this is currently being explored through studies.

19. **Will people need to get the vaccine every year or is it just the two doses?**
    At this time, both the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine and Moderna COVID-19 vaccine will only be administered in two doses. The Pfizer-BioNTech doses are given at least 21 days apart. And the Moderna doses are given at least 28 days apart.

20. **Will the vaccine still be effective if there is a delay between my first and second dose?**
    Yes. The time between doses can be lengthened; the time between doses can not be shortened.

21. **If someone travels after receiving the vaccine, do they still need to self isolate for 14 days after returning from their trip?**
    At this time, non-essential travel is not recommended. Self-isolation for two weeks following travel is a requirement and it will continue to remain in effect following vaccine administration.

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22. **Is it acceptable for someone with food or seasonal allergies to receive the COVID-19 vaccine?**
    Please talk with your physician or healthcare provider to learn if it is safe for you to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

23. **Will the COVID-19 vaccine stop the COVID-19 virus, or will it decrease the severity of the virus if I get infected?**
    Yes, the vaccines are very effective at preventing COVID-19 symptoms in people who get it. It is not known if you can still give the infection to someone that has not been immunized if you have been exposed to the virus.

24. **Will the COVID-19 vaccine be made mandatory? If the COVID-19 vaccine becomes mandatory, will medical exceptions be accepted?**
    At this time, the COVID-19 vaccine is not mandatory, but highly encouraged to help protect against the COVID-19 virus. Medical exceptions are not currently required.

25. **Do I get to choose what COVID-19 vaccine I get?**
    No. You will receive the vaccine that is available to you at that given time. The important thing is that you get the same vaccine for both doses. If you got the Moderna for your first shot, you must get the Moderna for your second shot. If you got the Pfizer-BioNTech for your first shot, you must get the Pfizer-BioNTech fro your second shot.

26. **What if I do not have a health card or Government issued ID? Can I still get the vaccine?**
    Yes – when you are eligible to get the vaccine, you will not be turned away because you do not have a health card or Government issued ID.

If you have any other questions or concerns, please connect with CK Public Health:

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