COVID-19 vaccines are safe, effective and the best way to protect you and those around you from COVID-19 and its variants. They are available for everyone 12 years of age and older.

Vaccine Safety

Only vaccines that are safe and effective are approved for use in Canada.

Creating a 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

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

How do vaccines work?

Vaccines reduce the risk of getting a disease. They tell your body to make antibodies to build protection and fight a virus if it enters your body. This protection can reduce your risk of getting COVID-19.

Vaccines do not use the live virus that causes COVID-19 and cannot give you COVID-19. However, if you come into contact with the virus just before or after receiving the vaccine, you may get COVID-19 since your body will not have time to build up its immunity.

Benefits of the COVID-19 vaccine

COVID-19 vaccines are approved in Canada for people 12 years of age and older, including those who are pregnant, breastfeeding, and have a medical condition. COVID-19 vaccines help to stop the spread of the virus and lower your chance of getting seriously ill, hospitalized or dying from COVID-19.

Two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine are required to get the best protection against COVID-19. The first dose is for strength and the second shot is for length of protection. Full protection from the vaccine occurs two weeks after you receive the second dose.

Building Immunity Takes Time

COVID-19 vaccines have been found to be very effective in preventing COVID-19; however, there is a chance that some people may still get COVID-19 even after they are vaccinated.

- **Building up immunity takes time.** After receiving your vaccine, your body is not immediately protected. It takes two weeks after getting your second vaccine to reach full protection against COVID-19.

Until enough people receive both doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, please continue to:

Maintain physical distance (2 metres) from others

Wear a face covering

Cover your cough/sneeze with a tissue or in your elbow.

Stay home if you're not feeling well

Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds (or use 70% hand sanitizer)

Avoid indoor gatherings and poorly ventilated areas

What are the side effects?

Some people may experience side effects when they receive the vaccine. Most of the side effects that have been reported are mild to moderate and will go away after a few days. The most common side effects include:

- pain at the injection site
- feeling tired (fatigue)
- headache
- feeling unwell or sick (nausea)

- muscle or joint pain
- fever or chills
- redness or swelling at the injection site