

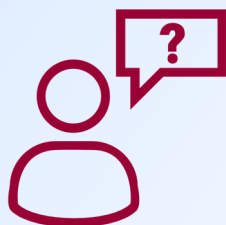
Here are the top COVID-19 vaccine Questions and Answers:

Ontario's doctors answer COVID-19 vaccine questions

Getting a COVID-19 vaccination will be one of the most important and effective things Ontarians can do to stop the pandemic once vaccines become widely available. Ontario's doctors are sharing their expert advice to ensure Ontarians have the information they need to keep their families safe and healthy.

Is the COVID vaccine safe?

All vaccine candidates are heavily scrutinized in clinical trials and by Health Canada. The approval process is rigorous. Even after approval, Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada continue to monitor the safety and effectiveness of vaccines.

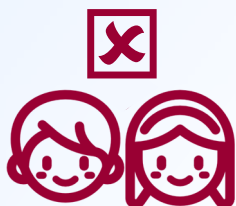


Who will get the vaccine first?

The federal vaccine framework determined those most likely to contract COVID-19 and those most likely to die from COVID-19 should get the vaccine first. The framework identifies four groups who will receive the vaccine first: long-term care workers and essential caregivers, long-term care residents, those over the age of 80 and Indigenous communities.

Where will we go to get the vaccine? When is it our turn?

The vaccine was initially distributed at specific centres across the province (starting with The Ottawa Hospital and University Health Network in Toronto). Vaccine programs will roll out in long-term care facilities, rural and remote areas, and local communities in the coming months as more vaccines are approved and become available.



Why are children not eligible for this vaccine? How will we achieve herd immunity if we cannot vaccinate children for another year?

The vaccine is approved for people 16 years of age and older. Clinical trials are underway for those aged 12 to 15, and under 12. It is likely children will be involved in Phase Three of the vaccine distribution (later this year) as further studies are completed.

Is the vaccine safe for pregnant and breastfeeding women?

We still don't have data on the risks for pregnant and breastfeeding women who get the COVID-19 vaccine. Some pregnant women, such as health care workers, are at a greater risk of contracting COVID-19 which could impact them and their pregnancy. Pregnant and breastfeeding women should assess the benefits and risks with their doctor before getting vaccinated for COVID-19.





What will I feel like after the vaccine? What are the side effects?

You can expect to feel similar to what you feel after receiving the flu vaccine. In the short-term, you may experience minor symptoms such as localized swelling or pain at the injection site. You can also feel unwell or get a headache or fever that lasts a few days.

I have heard that people who have experienced anaphylaxis or allergies should not take the vaccine? Who else should not take the vaccine?

Health Canada recommends those who have experienced anaphylaxis should avoid the vaccine only if they've had an allergic reaction to the first dose of the two-dose regime, or those allergic to one of the components. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization recommends women who are pregnant or breastfeeding should speak to their health care provider before receiving the vaccine. If you have specific questions regarding your eligibility, ask your doctor.

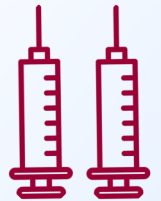


How does this vaccine work and what do we know about this new technology?

After receiving the vaccine, your body makes a protein to trick your body into thinking it's infected. Your body generates an antibody, an immune response it will remember if it encounters the virus in the future. While this is a new vaccine, it is not new technology. The messenger RNA response has been used for other medical treatments.

Why do we need two shots, and when can we consider ourselves protected?

The level of immune response begins to show 10-14 days after the first dose, but clinical trials show that to receive the best response and optimal immunity, two doses are required 21 days apart.



How long will this vaccine protect us? Will we need to get it annually like the flu shot? How is the COVID-19 vaccine different from the flu vaccine?

We do not know yet how long it will protect us, but the vaccine will continue to be studied to understand if we require annual vaccines, as we do with the flu shot. The flu vaccine triggers an immune response with a weakened or inactivated virus, whereas the COVID-19 vaccine allows our cells to make a protein that triggers an immune response and produce antibodies that protects us from getting infected.

How soon after getting the vaccine can we return to life before COVID-19?

It may take months or even years to see a dramatic decline in cases following the vaccine. Until we see a significant impact on the pandemic, public health and all levels of government will continue to mandate COVID-19 precautions such as physical distancing, wearing masks and frequent hand washing.



Adapted from Ontario Medical Association
20210121