Black&McDonald

COVID-19 VACCINE FAQS

0

WHICH VACCINES ARE CURRENTLY APPROVED FOR USE IN CANADA AND THE U.S.?

- COVID-19 vaccines produced by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna are the first vaccines approved for use. Both vaccines have been tested in large clinical trials to ensure they meet safety standards, and both have been licensed and approved.
- More information on vaccine production status can be found at the links below for the applicable country.





WHEN WILL THE COVID-19 VACCINES BE AVAILABLE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC?

- At first, there will be a limited supply of the vaccines as the global demand far outweighs the supply.
- Because vaccination falls under provincial and state jurisdiction, the exact sequence and timing for different individuals receiving the vaccines will be different in each province or state.
- In most jurisdictions the initial rollout will target health care workers in hospitals and long-term care homes. The priority is protecting people who are vulnerable to severe illness and death from COVID-19, and reducing the spread to high-risk populations.
- As more vaccines are deployed throughout Canada and the U.S., the vaccination program will be expanded to other health care workers, older adults, and other targeted groups.
- In many jurisdictions, vaccination of the general adult population is anticipated to begin in the spring of 2021, depending on vaccine supply and other considerations.
- While vaccination is not mandatory, everyone is strongly encouraged by all public health authorities to get vaccinated. In Canada, the vaccine will be available free-of-charge through provincial vaccination programs.

COVID-19 VACCINE FAQs

HOW DO THE COVID-19 VACCINES WORK?

- The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines contain instructions to tell our cells to make a protein that is found specifically with the coronavirus (which is the virus that causes the COVID-19 illness). These "spike proteins," although harmless to us, will trigger our body to start making antibodies. These new antibodies will protect us from illness if we are exposed to the coronavirus.
- The vaccines do not contain the virus and so they cannot give us COVID-19.
- Even after vaccination, it is important to continue to practice public health measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT KNOWN VACCINE SIDE EFFECTS?

- Vaccines will help protect us against COVID-19. Like any medicine, some people may have side effects from the vaccines. Common side effects such as a sore arm, muscle aches or a mild fever may occur, typically lasting only a few days. You may be requested to remain at your health care provider's office or the clinic where you received the vaccine for 15 minutes after the vaccine is given. Your health care provider or the clinic is prepared to treat any reactions, if it happens.
- Report to your health care provider if you have any unusual symptoms after receiving the vaccine.
 Symptoms may include:
 - A high fever (greater than 40C/104F)
 - An allergic reaction (rash, hives, itching, throat swelling, difficulty swallowing/breathing)
 - Severe vomiting, diarrhea and/or headache
 - Reactions that are severe or that do not go away, requiring a visit to a doctor or hospitalization

WHY ARE THESE VACCINATIONS SAFE CONSIDERING HOW QUICKLY THEY WERE DEVELOPED?

- mRNA vaccines (of which the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines are examples) have been used for a while in animal models for influenza, Zika, Rabies, CMV and cancer treatment. Because the mRNA vaccine platform can be quickly adapted to include instructions for an antibody target for a new virus such as COVID-19, the vaccines could be developed much more quickly than in the past.
- No steps were skipped in the process of developing, testing, approving and producing the vaccine.
 Independent scientists have thoroughly reviewed all the data before approving the vaccines as safe and effective.
- The vaccines were produced faster than before, not because of skipped steps, but because of never-beforeseen levels of collaboration and funding around the world invested in this effort. Unlike with previous vaccines that go one step at a time and then plan the next step, for the COVID-19 vaccines governments invested in having companies plan all the steps at the beginning and build up their manufacturing capacity right away.
- Normally, vaccine clinical trials need 6,000-8,000 people for the approval process. The Pfizer-BioNTech trial had over 45,000 people and the Moderna trial over 30,000. Even with these larger-than-typical clinical trials, there were no serious safety concerns.



COVID-19 VACCINE FAQs

WHO CAN GET VACCINATED?

- The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is licensed for use in people 16 years of age and older, including seniors. The Moderna vaccine is licensed for use in people 18 years of age and older.
- Consult with your health care provider if you:
 - Are younger than 18 years of age
 - Are pregnant, want to become pregnant soon after vaccination, or breastfeeding
 - Have an autoimmune disorder or weakened immune system (immunosuppression) due to illness or treatment
 - Have a bleeding problem or bruise easily
 - Have potential allergic reactions (anaphylactic)

Your health care provider will review the benefits and risks for your unique situation.

- Vaccination is not currently recommended for:
 - Individuals with a history of anaphylaxis after previous administration of the vaccine
 - Persons with proven immediate or anaphylactic hypersensitivity to any component of the vaccine or its container, including polyethylene glycol
 - Vaccination should be deferred in symptomatic individuals with confirmed or suspected SARS-CoV-2 infection, or those with symptoms of COVID-19
 - Acutely ill individuals
 - Individuals who have received another vaccine
 (not a COVID-19 vaccine) in the past 14 days

CAN I, OR SHOULD I, GET VACCINATED IF I ALREADY HAD COVID-19?

- Some people may have had COVID-19 and recovered. It is still recommended that they get vaccinated. Current evidence suggests that reinfection with the virus that causes COVID-19 is uncommon in the 90 days after the initial infection. However, although experts don't know for sure how long this protection (immunity) lasts the risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19 far outweighs any benefits of natural immunity. The COVID-19 vaccination will help protect you by creating an antibody (immune system) response without having to experience the sickness.
- Individuals with current COVID-19 infection or other active infection should wait until the infection is cleared and their healthcare professional has advised that they can proceed with vaccination.

SHOULD I TAKE THE VACCINE IF I AM PREGNANT OR BREASTFEEDING?

- There is limited information relating to the use of COVID-19 vaccines in pregnant women. If you are pregnant, breastfeeding or planning to have a baby, it is important to discuss COVID-19 with your health care provider to review the potential benefits and risks.
- As a precaution, avoid trying to get pregnant for one to two months after finishing the two-dose vaccine.



COVID-19 VACCINE FAQs

SHOULD I TAKE THE VACCINE IF I HAVE OTHER HEALTH CONDITIONS?

- People with stable health conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure and HIV, may receive COVID-19 vaccines as long they are not on medications that weaken the immune system. This also includes people with stable hepatitis B or C.
- It is recommended that you speak with your health care provider in advance to ensure that your health conditions will not be impacted by the vaccine.

WHAT PROTECTIVE MEASURES SHOULD I TAKE BEFORE AND AFTER VACCINATION?

 Even after vaccination, it is still important for everyone to continue with public health measures, such as wearing a mask, physical distancing and washing hands often, until vaccines are more widely available and we can be sure that they prevent the spread of most COVID-19 infections. These measures, combined with a healthy and active lifestyle, provide the best protection against COVID-19 and other viruses.

WILL THE VACCINATION PREVENT ME FROM GETTING COVID-19 IN THE FUTURE?

- All COVID-19 vaccines currently approved for use have been shown to be highly effective at preventing COVID-19.
- The remaining vaccines in development are being evaluated carefully in clinical trials and will be authorized and approved only if they make it substantially less likely that you'll contract COVID-19.
- Based on what is known about vaccines for other diseases and early data from clinical trials for COVID-19 vaccine, experts believe that getting vaccinated may keep you from getting seriously ill if you do contract COVID-19.