



THE FACTS ABOUT THE VACCINE FOR COVID-19

Nothing is more preventative than a vaccine that keeps us from getting sick. As a healthcare provider that prioritizes illness prevention, Centre de santé wants to ensure that when you make your decision about getting the vaccine, it is a decision informed by all available information. Centre de santé will update this newsletter as new information is released.

Centre de santé's recommendation on the vaccine is that the benefits of being vaccinated far outweigh the potential risk. Please contact us or your own doctor if you are not sure about getting vaccinated.

Q. Which vaccine should I take? Is one better than the other?

A. Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are the only ones that have been authorized in Canada – AstraZeneca is under review. Results from the studies of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines show that they are quite similar in their effects, with around 94-95% efficacy after the second dose. You should get 2 doses of the same vaccine. If that is not possible, then the second dose should be the same type of vaccine as the first (ie mRNA vaccine or viral vector vaccine)

Q. Can I choose which vaccine I get?

A. This depends on the supply in our area at the time you're vaccinated and whether certain vaccines are found to be more effective in certain populations, such as older adults.

Q. How do I know it's safe?

A. Health Canada reviews all aspects of the vaccine, including its safety, how well it works, and how it is made. Health Canada's independent drug authorization process is recognized around the world for its high standards and rigorous review. Its decisions are based only on scientific and medical evidence showing that vaccines are safe and effective. The benefits must also outweigh any risks.

Q. If I'm vaccinated, can I stop wearing a mask?

A. We don't know if people who have been vaccinated might still be able to pass on the virus. Therefore you should continue to follow local public health measures such as wearing a mask.

Q. If I have tested positive and recovered, do I need to get the vaccine?

A. Even if you've tested positive and recovered from COVID, experts recommend that you get the vaccine. Scientifically it makes sense, first because not everybody makes antibodies when they recover. Second, even in those individuals that make antibodies, the antibodies may go down over time as early as two to three months following infection. Third, we don't yet know if natural immunity is similar to vaccine-mediated immunity. In other words, the vaccine could induce a much stronger and longer-lasting immune response than necessarily natural infection would.

Q. Will this be a one-and-done (with two doses) type of shot or will it be a vaccine we need to get every year?

A. We don't know yet. It takes one week after the second shot for your immunity to build up. It's lasted for at least three months in several clinical trials, but we don't yet know if it's going to last for several years, or just a few months. Covid-19 is part of a family of viruses that cause a common cold that you can get over and over again because the immunity goes down. So this may be one of those vaccines that we will have to get multiple times, possibly every year.

Q. Why can't everyone get the vaccine now?

- A. There aren't enough doses for everyone, so initially the vaccine will be prioritized for those who need it most. The Ministry of Health has published a preliminary schedule of their vaccine distribution plans – you can see it here <https://www.quebec.ca/sante/problemes-de-sante/a-z/coronavirus-2019/deroulement-vaccination-contre-la-covid-19/#c78786>
- Q. **Is the vaccine safe for children?**
- A. We don't know yet. The vaccine is recommended only for adults right now. Clinical trials for people younger than 16 and for pregnant women are coming – then we will know if it's safe for them.
- Q. **What are the side effects and how long could they last?**
- A. The most common side effects are what you would feel with the flu shot – arm pain, fatigue, malaise, muscle aches, chills, and some people feel fever. Most side effects for people in the trial lasted a day or two.
- Q. **How long after getting the vaccine do I know I am protected? How long will the protection last?**
- A. You will be protected one week after the second shot of the Pfizer vaccine. With the Moderna vaccine, the second shot is not given until 28 days after the first shot, so you are protected about 35 days after the first shot.
- Q. **If I get the vaccine, is there a chance I can get and transmit the virus without knowing it?**
- A. We don't know. That's why wearing a mask is still going to be critical after the vaccine being administered.
- Q. **Will Centre de santé be an injection centre for Covid-19 vaccines?**
- A. The only injection site to date is the Centre des foires in Sherbrooke. If Centre de santé becomes an injection centre, we will publicize it and tell you how to get an appointment for an injection.
- Q. **With regard to the warning about those with severe allergies, what counts as a severe allergy?**
- A. Severe allergies are life-threatening allergic reactions. That includes anaphylaxis and it includes anyone that carries an epi-pen, whether it's for reactions to medications or to foods or other types of substances. It does not include those individuals with seasonal allergies for which they take antihistamines, nor for milder food allergies. Health Canada has issued a warning for people with severe allergies not to take the vaccine.
- Q. **Is it safe for diabetics?**
- A. Many different types of people were studied in the clinical trial, including those with Type 2 diabetes, those with high blood pressure, those with heart disease, those with chronic medical problems. The efficacy and safety profile of the vaccine in these groups was similar to those in the general population. With respect to Type 1 or autoimmune diabetes, this remains a question mark in terms of whether their immune responses would be similar to those of the general population.

Sources: Office of the Chief Medical Advisor, Health Canada

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/covid-19-vaccine-treatment.html>

<https://healthycanadians.gc.ca/recall-alert-rappel-avis/hc-sc/2020/74543a-eng.php>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/covid19-industry/drugs-vaccines-treatments/vaccines/development-approval-infographic.html>