

# COVID-19 vaccine information for tenants

## Frequently asked questions | April 16, 2021

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This document has been prepared to advise tenants on the COVID-19 vaccine and what Toronto Community Housing is doing to assist tenants to get vaccinated. This is done in collaboration with health partners across the city, including Toronto Public Health.

### **What is in the vaccine? Is it safe?**

Yes, the vaccine is safe. Only vaccines that Health Canada has approved and decided are safe and effective will be given in Ontario. Health Canada has a review system that is taken very seriously.

See the Ontario Ministry of Health's [Information Sheet on COVID-19 Vaccines](#) for further information.

### **When will I get the vaccine?**

The Government of Ontario has outlined a three-phase plan for giving the COVID-19 vaccine to residents of Ontario:

**Phase 1:** Vaccine available for health care workers in hospitals, long-term care homes and retirement homes, and remote Indigenous communities.

Started: **December 2020**

**Phase 2:** Available to older adults, people in high-risk settings, frontline essential workers and other populations that are at greater risk of illness.

Started: **April 2021**

**Phase 3:** Vaccines available to all residents of Ontario for anyone who wants to be immunized.

Starting: **July 2021**

**Please note that these dates are subject to change. The Government of Ontario will update [covid-19.ontario.ca](https://covid-19.ontario.ca) if there are any changes.**

## **Who is eligible to get the vaccine at this time?**

All tenants are encouraged to visit the City of Toronto's [COVID-19: How to get vaccinated webpage](#) and look under the Vaccine Eligibility heading to determine who is eligible to receive the vaccine. Tenants are encouraged to visit this webpage frequently as it gets updated often.

## **Why should I get vaccinated?**

The vaccine is an important way to protect yourself, your loved ones and your community against COVID-19. All COVID-19 vaccines are approved by [Health Canada](#) and have shown to be almost 100 per cent effective at preventing serious illness, hospitalization and death.

While the vaccine will protect each of us, the primary goal is to vaccinate the majority of the population so that COVID-19 can no longer spread. The sooner Ontarians are vaccinated, the sooner our lives can return to normal.

## **How can I get vaccinated?**

If you match the criteria outlined by the province for current eligibility, you are able to get vaccinated. If you wish to get the vaccine at a mass vaccination clinic, you must [book a COVID-19 vaccine appointment online](#). You may also visit a local pharmacy to receive the vaccine. Visit [covid-19.ontario.ca/vaccine-locations](#) to see a list of local participating pharmacies.

## **Will you be running vaccination clinics in TCHC buildings?**

Some buildings with high-risk tenants, like buildings in the Seniors Housing Unit portfolio, are working to set up vaccine clinics with partners or through Toronto Public Health. At this time, vaccines have been given to senior tenants within the Seniors Housing Unit right at their door to avoid gathering and encourage physical distancing.

If you are eligible to receive a vaccine at a mass vaccination clinic, at a pharmacy or through your family doctor, you are recommended to do that instead of waiting for a vaccine clinic to be scheduled at your building. Please note that not all communities will have in-building vaccine clinics.

## **How do the COVID-19 vaccines work?**

The COVID-19 vaccines tell your body how to make a safe protein found in the virus. Your body will start building antibodies that know how to fight the real virus if you come in contact with it.

## **How effective is the COVID-19 vaccine?**

The vaccines are approved by Health Canada and are expected to be up to 94 to 95 per cent effective after two doses in preventing COVID-19.

\*Effectiveness against preventing COVID-19 varies per specific vaccine. However, all vaccines approved by Health Canada are 100 per cent effective in preventing serious illness, hospitalization and death.

## **Do I still need to wear a mask after I've been vaccinated?**

Yes. Even if you have been vaccinated, it is important to continue to follow all public health advice. This includes maintaining a distance of at least two metres (six feet) from people outside your household, wearing a mask, washing your hands often, staying at home and limiting non-essential travel. These measures will help keep you, your loved ones and your community safe.

## **How long will the vaccine last? Do I need to get it each year? What about a booster shot to protect against COVID-19 variants?**

At this time, it is unknown if a COVID-19 booster shot is necessary in the future to maintain the protection provided by the vaccine administered in 2021.

## **Is there a microchip in the vaccine?**

No, there is no microchip in the vaccine.

## **How is the COVID-19 vaccine different from the flu vaccine?**

The COVID-19 vaccine and the flu vaccine are very different from each other. They target different viruses: the flu vaccine is developed annually to combat several influenza viruses that mutate, while the COVID-19 vaccine targets just one virus: SARS-CoV-2.

## **What if I don't take the second dose of the vaccines?**

For vaccines requiring two doses, it is important to receive both doses of the vaccine. Protection offered by the first dose is lower than what is achieved after the second dose. Once receiving both doses of the vaccine, it is proven to be 94 to 95 per cent effective. Maximum protection is only achieved after the second dose.

## **Can I sign up for a second dose that is different from the first dose? (For example, get a Moderna vaccine if I already got one dose of Pfizer?)**

If you already received one dose of the vaccine, it is recommended and encouraged that you follow through in receiving your second dose from the same vaccine developer. It is recommended that you do not switch between vaccines after receiving your first dose.

## **What vaccines have been approved in Canada?**

At this time, the Government of Canada has approved the following vaccines:

- [Moderna](#)
- [Pfizer-BioNTech](#)
- [AstraZeneca](#)
- [Janssen \(Johnson & Johnson\)](#)

Visit the Government of Canada's [Vaccines for COVID-19 webpage](#) for a more up-to-date list of vaccines that have been approved.

## **What was the approval process for the vaccines?**

Health Canada reviewed all data before approving the vaccines as safe and effective for Canadians. All safety steps were followed in approving these vaccines. The COVID-19 vaccines were developed quickly for many reasons, including:

- reduced delays in approving the vaccine
- existing research programs
- collaboration with scientists and governments world-wide

- increased dedicated funding
- quick gathering of clinical trial participants

### **Should I be worried about a vaccine that was developed so quickly?**

No. Only vaccines that Health Canada has approved and determined safe and effective will be administered in Ontario. These vaccines were developed faster than before because of the never-before-seen levels of teamwork and funding. The technology behind the vaccines has been around for more than 10 years and has already been used. As this advanced technology already existed, scientists were able to work quickly.

Visit [covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccine-safety#approving-vaccines-in-canada](https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccine-safety#approving-vaccines-in-canada) to learn about the vaccine review and approval process.

### **Can the vaccine give me COVID-19?**

No, the COVID-19 vaccine cannot give you COVID-19 or any other infectious disease. No vaccines approved by Health Canada contain the virus that causes COVID-19.

It is important to remember that it typically takes a few weeks for your body to build immunity after getting the vaccine. That means it is possible for a person to become infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 before or after vaccination. This is because the vaccine has not had enough time to provide protection.

Even after you get the vaccine, you should continue to follow the public health measures to keep you, your loved ones and your community safe.

### **Do I still need to get the vaccine if I already had COVID-19?**

If you have had COVID-19 and recovered, it is still recommended that you get vaccinated. There is some evidence to suggest that natural protection from a COVID-19 illness may not last very long. It is best to get vaccinated to stay protected.

### **If I am experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, should I get the vaccine?**

If you experience any COVID-19 symptoms, you should first get tested at any of the City's testing locations. To find a testing location closest to you, visit [covid-19.ontario.ca/assessment-centre-locations](https://covid-19.ontario.ca/assessment-centre-locations). Once you have been

tested, you should self-isolate until you receive your results. If you test positive for COVID-19, the self-isolation period is 14 days and you must wait 14 days to get the vaccine. If your test results come back negative, then you may proceed with getting the vaccine so long as you qualify under the province's rollout approach.

### **Will I experience side effects from the vaccine?**

Similar to medications and other vaccines, the COVID-19 vaccines can cause minor side effects. The most common side effects include soreness at the injection site on your arm, tiredness, chills and mild headache. These types of side effects are expected and show that the vaccine is working to protect you.

As with any medicines and vaccines, allergic reactions are rare but can happen after receiving a vaccine. If you have allergies that require you to carry an Epi-pen, you should bring it to your vaccine appointment and let clinic staff know.

If you are concerned about any reactions or side effects you have after getting the vaccine, contact your health care provider. You can also contact your local public health unit to ask questions or to report an adverse reaction. In case of an emergency, call **911**.

For more information, visit [covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccine-safety#possible-side-effects](https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccine-safety#possible-side-effects).

### **Are side effects from the second dose worse than the first dose?**

Side effects are more likely to occur after your second dose. Since side effects are the result of your immune system building protection, once your immune system has received the first dose then there is a much stronger immune response to the second dose. This is a good thing!

### **What are the longer-term side effects of this vaccine?**

Ongoing studies on the vaccines have found no serious side effects to date. People who got the vaccine in studies continue to be monitored for any longer-term side effects.

### **Has anyone died from taking a COVID-19 vaccine?**

No one is known to have died as a direct result of the COVID-19 vaccine.

## **I'm not high risk. COVID-19 isn't that bad. I don't need a vaccine.**

Globally, nearly two million people have died of COVID-19 in less than a year. COVID-19 does not discriminate, and anyone can become sick from the virus. Even if a healthy person does not die of COVID-19 infection, they may have long-term complications that affect their ability to experience normal life, such as shortness of breath, fatigue, headaches, muscle/joint pain, cognitive impairment, cough, loss of taste and loss of smell.

Even if you are not high-risk, there are other individuals in your community who may be high-risk whose immune system is not strong enough to receive a vaccine. When a majority of the community is vaccinated, it reduces the chances that a virus can spread and infect others. It also preserves capacity in our healthcare system to treat persons with other serious illnesses and diseases.

## **Should I wait to get the vaccine and see what happens to others before I decide to get it? If I don't take it now, will I get a chance later or will I be placed at the end of the line?**

The sooner the majority of Ontarians are vaccinated, the sooner our lives can return to normal. The province is working to distribute the vaccine as soon as supply is received. To make sure that everyone who wants to be vaccinated can be vaccinated safely and quickly, it is important that people who have access to the vaccine are vaccinated as soon as it is offered.

## **When can children get the vaccine?**

So far, a vaccine has not been approved for children. Research is underway to determine when those 16 years old and under can receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

## **Can my employer force me to take the vaccine?**

No. The vaccine is not mandatory in Ontario at this time.

## **Will I lose my tenancy if I don't get the vaccine?**

No. A tenant's lease or subsidy will not be impacted by whether or not they get the COVID-19 vaccine.

**What if I'm behind on my regular immunization schedule? Can I still get it?**

Yes. We also encourage those who are behind on their immunizations to contact their healthcare provider to get up to date.

**Where can I get more information?**

To learn more about the benefits of vaccination, who is currently eligible, and how to get vaccinated, visit the City's [COVID-19 webpage](#) or the [Province's COVID-19 webpage](#).

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