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Everything you need to know about vaccines

SPECIAL EDITION



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Vaccine rollout begins at QCH: A letter from Dr. Andrew Falconer

Hello Team QCH,

Much has happened over the last week regarding the COVID-19 vaccination plan at the federal, provincial and local levels. Today we were informed that scheduled vaccination of hospital workers in Ottawa will begin tomorrow – excellent news!

Initially, QCH will be allocated 300 vaccination slots for January 1 -3, and expect to be given more soon after. We are following the province's guidance for vaccine distribution starting with health care workers who may be at greater risk of exposure to COVID-19. We will begin with staff and physicians who work in these areas:

- ICU
- Emergency Department
- ACE – COVID unit

As background, the provincial government is responsible for the deployment of vaccines and identifying which groups get vaccinated when. It has laid out a three-phase rollout strategy and released an ethical framework, which includes:

- 1 Phase 1 starting December 15, 2020:** health care workers in LTC homes, retirement homes, hospitals and other congregate care settings and remote indigenous communities.
- 2 Phase 2 starting in winter 2021:** Increasing stock of vaccines available to all health care workers, residents in Long-Term Care homes, retirement homes, home care patients with chronic conditions and additional indigenous communities.
- 3 Phase 3 when supply allows:** Vaccine available widely across Ontario to anyone who wants to be immunized.



We are currently in phase 1 of the vaccine rollout. An incident command structure has been put in place between the hospital, public health and the City of Ottawa to coordinate the vaccination rollout. The goal is to vaccinate the health care workers in all hospitals — and staff from LTC's and retirement homes and essential caregivers — over the next 6-8 weeks. The Civic Campus Vaccination Clinic will operate 7 days a week with a goal of immunizing 1,500 to 1,800 people each day with first or second doses. More information on how to book your vaccination appointments will be provided in the coming weeks.

People across the region are working hard to distribute the vaccine as fairly, quickly and efficiently as possible. We need to remember that there will be changes and improvements to the processes along the way as additional information is coming at an unprecedented pace. We will keep you updated along the way.

We appreciate your patience and support for this rollout — and your on-going support of each other. We are all in this together. One team. #QCHstrong.

I'll close out this letter with a reminder — one you are probably sick of hearing, but needs to be said. This vaccine is great news, but it will take many months to roll out broadly. Please continue to be vigilant and stay safe.

Thank you.

Andrew





The information contained herein has been sourced directly from the Government of Ontario documents and has been condensed to provide you with key details that are relevant to your work.

In a nutshell

We are very fortunate that COVID-19 vaccines have been developed and tested in record time. Studies show they are safe, and they work.

It will take many months for everyone to be vaccinated – this will be rolling out over much of 2021.

When vaccines are available at QCH, we encourage you to get your vaccine as soon as possible. This booklet was put together from the best information available to help you be informed in advance and give you time to ask any questions you might have.

While we have firm details and evidence about the vaccine itself, there is much work still happening on the rollout plans. This means that some of the information about where, when and how might change. But we'll update you frequently and are here to answer your questions.

Let's start from the beginning – what is the vaccine?



Vaccines help the body protect itself from becoming sick against COVID-19.

The first vaccine to be approved in Canada is the Pfizer-BioNTech, which uses a method called messenger RNA (mRNA). The mRNA is like a code that tells the cells in your body how to make a piece of the outer lining of the virus, for a short time. This piece of the virus is not harmful to you, but it is enough for your immune system to learn how to recognize and be ready to fight off the virus.

This mRNA method is not new – there is more than a decade of research and development behind it, and it has been successfully used in cancer treatments.

The Pfizer vaccine is given in two doses, 21 days apart. It is given just like the flu shot – a needle to the arm – except you will get two shots in total.

Moderna's vaccine was approved on December 23. This vastly increases the vaccine supply, as well as the flexibility in administering the vaccine. The Government of Canada has also signed agreements with several other leading pharmaceutical companies to make sure there are enough doses for everyone.

Here is what the government has purchased so far:

Company purchased vaccines under review	Type of vaccine	Doses ordered
Moderna	mRNA vaccine	up to 56 million doses
AstraZeneca	viral vector vaccine	up to 20 million doses
Johnson and Johnson/ Janssen Inc.	viral vector	up to 38 million doses

Purchased vaccines not yet under review by Health Canada	Type of vaccine	Doses ordered
Sanofi and GSK	adjuvanted recombinant protein-based vaccine	up to 72 million doses
Novavax	protein-based vaccine	up to 76 million doses
Medicago	virus-like particle vaccine	up to 76 million doses
Total ordered	up to 338 million doses (169 million people)	





How well does the vaccine work?

In a large study, people who received the Pfizer vaccine were 95% less likely to become sick with COVID-19 compared to the group that did not receive the vaccine.

Based on the results of the clinical trials, the best protection is not achieved until 7 days after the second dose, but it remains unknown how long the protection will last.

The Moderna vaccine, which is the second vaccine that is expected to be approved in Canada, is also proven to be 95% effective.

Is the vaccine safe?

You can be confident. Top experts, scientists and medical professionals carefully reviewed all the scientific data and evidence for the vaccine, for safety and effectiveness.

This is not a live vaccine and does not contain the virus; therefore, the vaccine cannot give people COVID-19.

More than 40,000 doses were administered, with minimal side effects reported to date. However, you may experience some mild symptoms on the day or two after receiving the vaccine.

How did the vaccine get made and approved so quickly?

Safety and quality have not been compromised to expedite the approval of COVID-19 vaccines. Things are progressing so well for many reasons, including:

- Scientists, researchers and governments around the world worked together, sharing information and resources
- Scientists had existing research they could adapt, like the mRNA
- The government increased dedicated funding
- Quick recruitment of participants for clinical trials
- Governments prioritized the approval process to make sure there were no delays



Side effects

Like all vaccines, there can be some side effects. Studies of the 40,000 people show that:

- Only some people will experience side effects from the vaccine
- Side effects are typically mild to moderate
- They usually only last 1 – 2 days

The risks of getting COVID-19 are far worse than the impact of the side effects.

Some of the symptoms are part of the body's response to developing immunity and indicate that the vaccine is working. The most common side effects in trials were:

- Fatigue
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Chills
- Joint Pain
- Fever

Some side effects will mean that healthcare workers will need to stay at home – such as fever. If that is the case, yes, you will get paid leave for any missed pre-scheduled shifts and ask to self-isolate for 24 hours and wait to see if your symptoms improve before getting a COVID-19 test. However, you can continue to work if:

- You feel well enough
- It is within 48 hours of your vaccine
- If you only have non-respiratory symptoms: i.e. headache, fatigue muscle pain



Rollout: When can I get a vaccine?

Rollout to all Canadians will take many months and continue through much of 2021. However, as a healthcare worker, you are a priority.




Delivery to Canadians will depend on when doses are available from the manufacturer. The timing of delivery will depend on:

- Timing of the regulatory approval
- Access to raw materials to make the vaccines – as they are in high demand
- How quickly manufacturers can ramp-up production

The government of Ontario will roll-out vaccine distribution in phases. Here is a summary:

ONTARIO'S COVID-19 VACCINATION PROGRAM

PHASES

	VACCINE QUANTITY	POPULATION TO BE VACCINATED	DISTRIBUTION SITES
 1	<p>Initial doses will vaccinate over 2,500 people, with additional shipments arriving over the coming weeks</p> <p>90,000 doses of Pfizer-BioNTech and estimated 35,000-85,000 doses of Moderna vaccines are expected in the coming weeks</p> <p>An estimated total of over 2M doses is expected in this phase</p>	<p>Residents, essential caregivers, and staff of congregate care settings for seniors</p> <p>Health care workers</p> <p>Adults in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit populations</p> <p>Adult recipients of chronic home health care</p>	<p>Initially, two pilot sites, followed by selected hospital sites in Grey-Lockdown and Red-Control zones, expanding to approximately 21 hospitals across the province</p> <p>LTC Homes and Retirement Homes as soon as feasible.</p>
 2	<p>Increasing stock of vaccines available.</p>	<p>Expanded for health care workers, long-term care homes, retirement homes, home care patients with chronic conditions and additional First Nation communities and urban Indigenous populations, including Métis and Inuit adults.</p>	<p>Expanded vaccination sites</p>
 3	<p>Vaccines available for every Ontarian who wants to be immunized.</p>	<p>All eligible Ontarians</p>	<p>Widely available across Ontario</p>



Roll out (continued)

The number of doses will be limited in the early phases, so the government has identified these groups for the first doses:

- Residents, employees and staff, and essential caregivers of congregate living settings that provide care for seniors
- Health care workers (including all those who work in health care settings and those in direct contact with patients)
- Adults in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit populations where infection can have disproportionate consequences, including those living in remote or isolated areas
- Adult recipients of chronic home health care

The government will also have to examine the roll out within these groups as well. For instance, initially, the Pfizer vaccine cannot be moved easily from place to place since it must be kept very cold. As a result, the government has chosen to first vaccinate staff from long term care homes rather than residents, because staff can easily travel to the hospital vaccination sites.

As other vaccines become available, they will continue the roll out to other people in the list (above) and then add other groups to the list.

Vaccines for QCH

Scheduled vaccinations for hospital staff will begin January 1st and take place in phases with the goal of reaching all healthcare workers in 6 - 8 weeks. Details are still evolving, however, here are some assumptions we are making:

- Doses will likely come in batches – we aren't likely to get enough for the entire team all at once. Sometimes there will be very short notice.
- We expect the government to direct the order of vaccinations – for instance, first vaccinating those staff directly working with patients who have COVID-19 or who are suspected to have the virus, etc.
- Given the side effects, we may need a staged approach to vaccination – making sure we have enough staff available to work in any given unit. This means that not all staff from a unit may be vaccinated in the same week. A lottery system may be used.
- We hope to be able to do vaccinations on site at some point but can't yet confirm if this will be possible in the future.

At this stage, all these points are just planning assumptions. We may be given specific government directives. We will update you as we get new information.



After the vaccinations

- **Immediately after getting your vaccine**, you'll be asked to wait 15 minutes so you can be observed for side effects. And you'll be asked to report any other side effects to Occ Health.
- **Masks and physical distance:** You will need to continue to wear PPE at work and masks in public. While we know that vaccines protect you from COVID-19, there isn't yet enough evidence to show that it prevents you from spreading it to others, or how long you will be protected. Masks and physical distance will still be part of our work and our life for many months.
- **Second dose:** You'll need to get a second dose of the vaccine 21 days after your first dose.
- **PPE:** It goes without saying there are NO changes to our PPE protocols.

Who should not get the vaccine?

- **People with allergies to ingredients, including polyethylene glycol.**
- **Anyone who has symptoms that could be due to COVID-19. Please get a test first.**
- **Under the age of 16.**
- **Women who are or could be pregnant.**
- **Women who are breastfeeding.**
- **Immunosuppressed persons due to disease or suffering from an autoimmune disorder.**



Q: Are staff required to get the COVID-19 vaccine?

A: No, it isn't mandatory. But we highly encourage you to get it as soon as it is made available to you because we want you to stay safe and healthy.

Q: Will I be scheduled for my vaccine during my scheduled time or on my personal time? If it's on my personal time, will I get paid?

A: We would like to be able to do some during scheduled time, but we don't yet know if that is feasible. We will have to get back to you on this one. However, since vaccines are voluntary, staff would not be paid for coming in on personal time to get a vaccine.

Q: I had COVID-19, should I get the vaccine?

A: Yes, it is still recommended that you get the vaccine if you have recovered and are no longer symptomatic.

Q: What if I get the vaccine and I get symptoms or have an adverse reaction. Will I still get paid? Do I need to be tested?

A: Some side effects will mean that healthcare workers will need to stay at home – such as fever. If that is the case, yes, you will get paid leave for any pre-scheduled shifts and be asked to self-isolate for 24 hours and wait to see if your symptoms improve before getting a COVID-19 test. However, you can continue to work if:

- You feel well enough
- It is within 48 hours of your vaccine
- If you only have non-respiratory symptoms: i.e. headache, fatigue, muscle pain.

Q: Will I be able to bring my family to be vaccinated at the same time as my vaccination?

A: The Ministry of Health is distributing the vaccines in phases to various segments of the population within the Province. Further details to be released at a later date.

Q: Will other vaccines, such as the influenza vaccine, help protect me from COVID-19?

A: Currently, there is no evidence that any other existing vaccines will protect against COVID-19.

Q: What if I did not get the vaccine and there is an outbreak on my unit?

A: Staff who are unvaccinated can still work in their home unit following their current PPE guidelines. Staff are encouraged to speak with their manager about PPE and how it relates to their specific role or task. Health-care workers should continue to perform a point-of-care risk assessment (PCRA).



