

Answering Your Questions about COVID-19

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Question 1: Is the third dose mandatory?

The general public is not officially required to get a third dose, but health experts strongly encourage it for protection against variants of concern.

Generally speaking, the purpose of a booster dose is to restore vaccines' protection, which can decrease over time. For COVID-19, we know that, compared to the unvaccinated, those with two doses are still much less likely to get infected or have severe COVID-19 symptoms.

However, there is also evidence that, as more time passes after getting the second dose, there is a higher risk of getting COVID-19. This is because the two-dose vaccine series was created for the original strain of COVID-19, and many breakthrough cases are variants of concern like the Omicron variant. We don't know exactly how effective two doses are against the Omicron variant, but we know that the booster dose provides more protection than two doses.

Although everyone is encouraged to get the third dose, certain people are especially recommended to get it. This includes if you are moderately or severely immunocompromised and/or if you are taking any significantly immunosuppressive medications. If you're not sure if this applies to you, check out pages 5 to 12 of [this document](#).

You are also especially recommended to get a third dose if you are: a resident of a Long-Term Care Home, Retirement Home, or Elder Care Lodge; an older adult living in other congregate settings; between the ages of 12 and 29 or over the age of 50; a healthcare worker; someone who is First Nations, Inuit, and Métis; and/or someone who received two doses of viral vector vaccines (which are the AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD or Janssen COVID-19 vaccine).

Sources:

1. https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/vaccine/COVID-19_vaccine_third_dose_recommendations.pdf

2. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-doug-ford-announcement-covid19-february-14-1.6350761>

Question 2: I am not going to the clinic. I am afraid to go. Will they come to me? I live in downtown Toronto.

Yes, they can! It depends on your specific situation, but in general, people with disabilities who aren't homebound or immunocompromised have been able to book at-home vaccination appointments with no difficulties.

Please don't hesitate to request at-home vaccination through the health service that you are currently linked with. Be sure to explain how your fear of going to a clinic relates to your specialized needs as a person with a disability. This includes needs that are medical, physical, communication, behavioural, related to a developmental disorder, and more. They will tell you if you aren't eligible for in-home vaccination, so there is no risk in asking.

You can request at-home vaccination through your primary care provider or your physician primary care team, your homecare and community service provider, or Home and Community Care Support Services (HCCSS).

If you aren't linked with a primary care or homecare provider, call the Toronto Seniors Helpline at 416-217-2077. The helpline is not only for seniors. It is available to determine if adults of any age are eligible for an in-home COVID-19 vaccination. If you receive care through primary care or homecare and HCCSS, please contact your primary or homecare provider first. If your primary care or homecare service provider cannot provide the vaccine, you will be referred to Toronto Paramedic Services.

Source:

1. <https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-how-to-get-vaccinated/covid-19-homebound-vaccinations/>

Question 3: Why are the vaccine passports ending when COVID-19 is still here?

I agree that this announcement is confusing.

As of March 1, showing proof of vaccination is no longer required by law, but businesses still have the right to ask to see it. To clarify, health experts insist that the pandemic and the need to get your third dose are not over just because mandatory vaccine passports are over. Health experts recommend that you protect yourself against variants of concern by wearing masks, washing your hands frequently, and, most importantly, getting vaccinated and boosted.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford stated that the vaccine passport system is ending because of the downward trend of hospitalizations. He also said: "The extraordinary measures that we introduced during this pandemic were always intended as a last resort. I stood at this very podium and promised you that these tools would only be used for as long as they were absolutely necessary and not one day longer."

Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. Kieran Moore stated, "We have the level of protection we need to remove public health restrictions."

Source:

1. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-doug-ford-announcement-covid19-february-14-1.6350761>

Question 4: When can we cross the border? Are the protests still there?

Yesterday, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that the blockades at most places along the border have been cleared, and the situation is no longer an emergency. At the time of

writing, most people participating in the blockades have gone home, and you can cross the Ambassador Bridge connecting Windsor and Detroit.

I recommend that you continue checking the news because there is a chance that people will return to the border once the Emergency Act is no longer in effect. Click [here](#) to learn more information about our border with the United States. If you want to ask any questions about it, you can fill out [this online form](#). If your question is time-sensitive, you can call 1-800-461-9999, which is toll-free in Canada and the United States.

Sources:

1. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/video?playlistId=1.5694208>
2. <https://www.ambassadorbridge.com/>
3. <https://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/contact/bis-sif-eng.html>
4. <https://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/contact/csform-formulairesc-eng.html>

Question 5: Do Personal Support Workers (PSWs) need to get the booster shot? If they do, when is the deadline for them to get the third dose?

PSWs who work in a Long-Term Care home must show proof that they received the booster shot by March 14, but this does not apply to all PSWs. If you have a PSW in another setting, such as congregate living settings or in your home, it's best to directly ask the agency that employs your PSW if they have a 2-dose or a 3-dose mandatory vaccination policy.

Source:

1. <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/ontario-extends-booster-deadline-for-long-term-care-staff-until-march-14-1.5757629>

Question 6: When will regular doctor's appointments begin again?

The short answer is that it depends on your location. Click [here](#) to find your local public health unit. Then, visit their website to see what options for in-person doctor's appointments are available in your area.

There is more information on this topic provided by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, which is the association that regulates Ontario doctors. They recommend that, if you have a doctor who you normally see, reach out to them and find out how they can take care of your needs and the best way you can receive it. Your doctor can help you determine when you can receive care based on your individual needs and available resources. Be sure to tell them if there has been any changes to your health.

Public health officials have sent many doctors to give people vaccines so that more people can be vaccinated as soon as possible. As a result, there is a backlog of patients who need "non-essential, non-urgent, or elective care" that are waiting for doctors returning to regular appointments. Doctors are prioritizing care based on need, capacity, and resources. There are also extra precautions in place to make sure everyone is safe, which may mean that they see fewer patients in a day. Click [here](#) to read more frequently asked questions about this topic.

Source:

1. <https://www.cpsso.on.ca/en/Public/Services/Patient-Help-Centre/COVID-19-FAQs-for-Patients>

Question 7: Can I go visit my sister if she has 2 doses but I have 3?

Yes, you can! If you and your sister do not have any COVID-19 symptoms and you feel healthy, you can see each other. If you feel hesitant, you can always ask her if she has recently seen anybody who is unvaccinated and plan when you will visit her around that.

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If you think you may be experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, take the self-assessment at www.ontario.ca/coronavirus. Follow all directions from your medical provider or your local

health unit at the following phone numbers:

Telehealth Ontario: 1-866-797-0000

Toronto Public Health: 416-338-7600

Peel Public Health: 905-799-7700

Durham Region Health Department: 905-668-7711

York Region Public Health: 1-877-464-9675