

Answering Your Questions

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This document was prepared on October 4, 2021 by Natalie Garrison. Natalie works for North Yorkers for Disabled Persons as an Outreach Communication Facilitator, Information Referral and Resources Support. She can be reached at natalie.nydp@gmail.com.

Question: I am scared COVID will never be over.

Thank you for reaching out! It's still a scary time, especially for people with disabilities. If it's any comfort, you are not alone! Click [here](#) to read an article that I wrote to answer your submission in more detail. It has advice from healthcare professionals about feeling anxious about COVID-19 and an uncertain future.

If you're interested in mental health support, but you feel overwhelmed by the number of options, contact [ConnexOntario](#). They can help you navigate the system and provide information about counselling services and support services in your community.

Sources:

1. https://www.nydp.ca/uploads/1/5/1/7/15170544/3_things_to_do_when_it_feels_like_covid-19_will_never_end.pdf
2. <https://www.connexontario.ca/en-ca/>

Question: There are a lot of breakthrough cases in Toronto. Should I be worried? I am vaccinated with Pfizer.

Even though you're less likely to catch COVID-19 than someone who is unvaccinated, everyone who is vaccinated should still follow health advice to avoid being infected and spreading the virus. This applies to everyone, no matter which brand of vaccine you got.

Also, it's important to know that sometimes fully vaccinated people with breakthrough cases don't feel any symptoms. They just find out during a routine COVID-19 test. Because you don't want to risk spreading it, it's important that you take it seriously if you think you have any symptoms. Even if you think there's just a small chance, take the self-assessment at www.ontario.ca/coronavirus.

That said, there is no need for you to be any more worried than you usually are! Click [here](#) to learn more about breakthrough cases.

Sources:

1. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/vaccines-not-enough-to-stop-fourth-wave-of-covid-19-in-canada-experts-warn-1.5560876>
2. https://www.nydp.ca/uploads/1/5/1/7/15170544/website_memo_august_30.pdf

Question: Can I still ask my PSW to wear PPE even if they are vaccinated?

Yes, your PSW should always wear PPE with you. Even if you screen negative for COVID, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care requires that all healthcare workers, including PSWs, are required to wear a surgical mask and follow hand hygiene protocols after they remove PPE and before and after contact with you and the place that you're in. If you're not wearing a mask, your PSW is required to wear eye protection, which could be either goggles or a face shield. If you are wearing a mask, they don't need to wear eye protection, depending on your situation. You are always allowed to ask them to wear more PPE.

If you have any concerns that your PSW is not following COVID-19 protocols, contact their employer, which is the homecare agency. If you feel that the homecare agency is not cooperating with COVID-19 protocols, and/or if you need to modify your services, contact your Care Coordinator directly.

Another option is contacting the Long-Term Care Action Line, even if you are not a resident of a Long-Term Care home. In 2007, this line was expanded so that patients and caregivers could raise concerns or complaints about home and community care services. It's provided by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

If you contact the Long-Term Care Action Line, an Independent Complaints Facilitator will be assigned to help you address your concern or complaint. You can contact the Long-Term Care Action Line by telephone at 1-866-876-7658, or online at: www.health.gov.on.ca.

For more information, visit: <https://healthcareathome.ca/central/en/Contact-Us/Feedback>.

Sources:

1. https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_primary_care_guidance.pdf (page 11).
2. www.health.gov.on.ca
3. <https://healthcareathome.ca/central/en/Contact-Us/Feedback>

Question: Can a priest or pastor give a religious exemption if a PSW doesn't want the vaccine?

No, they can't. According to a directive from the Chief Medical Officer of Health, the only exemption for healthcare workers not being vaccinated is if they can provide "written proof of a medical reason, provided by a physician or registered nurse" that proves "a documented medical reason for not being fully vaccinated against COVID-19."

There are some religious exemptions in the United States, but that doesn't apply to us! You can always visit <https://ontario.ca> to stay updated about changing COVID-19 measures.

Sources:

1. https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/directives/vaccination_policy_in_health_settings.pdf

2. <https://www.osler.com/en/resources/regulations/2021/exemptions-from-mandatory-covid-19-vaccination-policies-key-considerations-for-hospitals-and-health>

Question: Does the vaccine work as well against the new variants?

The vaccines aren't as effective against the new variants compared to the original strain (a.k.a. version) of the virus. This is because most of the vaccines were designed in 2020 based on the original strain. It was also before many of the mutants existed or were identified. However, two doses of mRNA vaccines still provide a strong level of protection against variants of concern.

There isn't as much data on the vaccines' effectiveness against specific variants, but there is some on the Delta variant in particular. Many health experts have said that the Delta variant is more resistant to COVID-19 vaccines. For the Delta variant, according to the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI), "emerging research" suggests that two doses of the Pfizer vaccine is 87.9% effective against symptomatic illness, and two doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine is 59.8% effective against symptomatic illness ([page 51](#)).

"Emerging research" means that these studies haven't been confirmed yet, so keep in mind that these numbers might change later. The document didn't mention anything about the effectiveness of the Moderna or Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccines against the Delta variant.

Sources:

1. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2777785>
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/15/the-covid-delta-variant-how-effective-are-the-vaccines>
3. <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/immunization/national-advisory-committee-on-immunization-naci/recommendations-use-covid-19-vaccines/recommendations-use-covid-19-vaccines-en.pdf>

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