

Answering Your Questions about COVID-19

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Question 1: How many people are getting COVID-19 after being fully vaccinated?

Recently, Public Health Ontario started sharing the vaccination status of people who are getting COVID-19 and people who need to be hospitalized because of COVID-19. According to [this update](#), “Only 6.4% of cases post-vaccination occurred 14 or more days after dose 2 administration.”

Of all of the cases of COVID-19 that were found in partially vaccinated people from December 14, 2020 to August 7, 2021,

- 48.7% got infected within 0-13 days after Dose 1,
- 18.4% got infected more than 28 days after Dose 1,
- 2.5% got infected within 0-13 days after Dose 2, and
- 6.4% got infected more than 28 days after Dose 1.*

About two weeks ago, the Toronto Star analyzed the data that Public Health Ontario had shared so far about the vaccination status of COVID-19 hospital patients. According to their calculations, if you are unvaccinated, you are nearly 20 times as likely to end up in hospital with COVID-19 when compared to people who are fully vaccinated. Also, according to their analysis, people who are unvaccinated are about 70 times more likely to end up in an Intensive Care Unit.

A recent research study, which examined 43,338 COVID-19 cases in England between March 29 and May 23, 2021, found that fully vaccinated people made up only 1.8% of COVID-19 cases with the Alpha or Delta variants. Meanwhile, 24% of those cases were in partially vaccinated people and the remaining 74% of cases were in unvaccinated people.

Sources:

1. <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/epi/covid-19-epi-confirmed-cases-post-vaccination.pdf?la=en>
2. <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2021/08/16/todays-coronavirus-news-august-16-2021.html?fbclid=IwAR2ZBwvAKKDFmLGBHO7mNiaG65z2RcjcE3NykrXX63TOSIMsVBo4QyDd3mA>
3. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/delta-variant-doubles-risk-of-covid-19-hospitalization-for-unvaccinated-study-suggests-1.5564539>

Question 2: Are mixed vaccines still considered safe for people with disabilities?

Unless your disability affects your immune response, the guidance from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) should also apply to you. Based on real world data, NACI has consistently stated that mixing doses of mRNA vaccines is safe and effective. On top of that, the benefits of getting vaccinated outweigh the possible health risks of mixing vaccines. Click [here](#) to read more about mixing vaccines.

Unfortunately, there is no data from clinical trials that confirm that mixing vaccines is safe for people with disabilities. In fact, there is very limited data from clinical trials about whether the typical two-dose series of the same vaccine are safe for people with autoimmune conditions and people who are immunocompromised.

However, real world data shows that vaccines are considered generally safe for anyone who does not have any contraindications. “Contraindications” are any conditions that could put your health at risk during vaccination.

If you have any concerns about how mixing vaccines might interact with your specific disability, I strongly recommend that you speak with your healthcare provider about it. If you don't have a family doctor, you can call 1-866-797-0000 to discuss your situation with a Registered Nurse at Telehealth Ontario. The phone call is confidential and free.

Sources:

1. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/national-advisory-committee-on-immunization-naci/recommendations-use-covid-19-vaccines.html>
2. https://covid19-sciencetable.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/COVID-19-Vaccination-for-People-with-Disabilities_v.1.1_20210615_published.pdf
3. <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid19-cms-assets/2021-06/moh-second-dose-factsheet-en-2021-06-20.pdf>

Question 3: Are there interpretation services at vaccine clinics for people who don't speak English?

There is government support for booking vaccine appointments over the phone in another language, but interpreters often aren't present at the clinic unless they are volunteers. I looked into it, and there is no way to search for clinics based on the language of the interpreter that will be there. Some community services like [Access Alliance](#) offer [remote](#) and [in-person](#) interpretation services at a non-profit price, but you would have to pay for it yourself.

You can always call your local public health unit for information. Click [here](#) to identify your public health unit and learn how to contact them. Click [here](#) for more information about booking a vaccine appointment over the phone with the help of an interpreter. Click [here](#) for information about COVID-19 translated into other languages.

Sources:

1. <https://accessalliance.ca/about-us/>
2. <https://accessalliance.ca/access-alliance-language-services/remote-interpretation/>
3. <https://accessalliance.ca/access-alliance-language-services/on-site-interpretation/>
4. <https://www.phdapps.health.gov.on.ca/phulocator/>
5. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-communication-resources#get-help-by-phone>
6. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-communication-resources>

Question 4: Are all clinics accessible or only the ones listed as accessible? Don't they all have to follow the AODA?

Ideally, all clinics would be accessible and able to accommodate multiple disabilities. It can feel stigmatizing to have to go to a different clinic that is not conveniently located in your neighbourhood.

Unfortunately, many mass vaccination clinics and pop-up clinics are *not* accessible. Some people with disabilities have shared that clinics do not offer the support that they need, and this has been an ongoing barrier for people with disabilities who want to get vaccinated.

Some vaccine clinics are wheelchair accessible, but this is often the only accessibility accommodation that is available. You can ask about what accommodation is available at clinics near you by contacting your local public health clinic. This is because public health units are the ones that manage mass vaccination sites.

Click [here](#) to identify your public health unit and learn how to contact them. Pop-up clinics often operate individually, and they are not always under the jurisdiction of public health units.

In contrast, accessible clinics often have a variety of supports for a variety of disabilities, such as attendants, sighted guides, ASL interpreters and other interpreters, private spaces to get vaccinated, places to sit while you wait, and more. There are accessible clinics coming to Toronto around mid-October.

In response to your second question, unfortunately, there is no legal obligation for vaccination clinics to be accessible because the AODA does not currently have healthcare standards. A positive piece of news is that AODA requirements for healthcare providers are currently being developed.

Sources:

1. <https://www.phdapps.health.gov.on.ca/phulocator/>
2. <https://aoda.ca/what-are-aoda-standards/>
3. <https://aoda.ca/aoda-requirements-for-healthcare-providers/>

Question 5: Why do I have to be vaccinated to receive services but staff don't have to be to provide services?

It would make sense if it went both ways, where you show staff your vaccine receipt or certificate and they show you theirs. It's frustrating and confusing that staff don't have to be vaccinated or tell clients their vaccination status, but yet you have to be fully vaccinated and show them proof of your vaccination status for some programs.

Labour laws make it more complicated for organizations to create and enforce rules that would make their employees do something that they don't want to do, even if the rule would protect the people who use their services. Organizations have an obligation to create policies that protect the safety and rights of their staff.*

As a result, it is considered a violation of the staff's right to privacy for them to share their vaccination status with service users. Many people think that it's unfair to put the privacy rights of staff above the safety of clients who depend on healthcare services.* You can still ask your service provider if they are vaccinated, but they have a right not to tell you.

You might have heard that [it is now mandatory for employees in high-risk settings to be vaccinated](#). High-risk settings include: congregate group homes and day programs for adults with developmental disabilities, post-secondary institutions, licensed retirement homes, women's shelters, public schools, licenced children's residential settings, as well as children's treatment centres and other services for disabled children.*

This headline isn't entirely true. Employers still can't make their staff get vaccinated, and unvaccinated staff can still work in these high-risk settings. Employees who can't get vaccinated for medical reasons need to give their employers proof. Employees who refuse to get vaccinated for non-medical reasons, including religious reasons or personal beliefs, can also keep their job.* However, they need to attend an educational session about COVID-19 vaccines before they submit their decision to be unvaccinated to their employer.*

According to the new directive, this information session must, at the very least, discuss:

- how COVID-19 vaccines work;
- vaccine safety related to the development of the COVID-19 vaccines;
- the benefits of vaccination against COVID-19;
- risks of not being vaccinated against COVID-19; and
- possible side effects of COVID-19 vaccination.*

That said, in high-risk settings, there are still rules to protect service users from unvaccinated employees.* These employees will have to do regular COVID-19 antigen tests.* All other staff must show their employer proof that they received two doses, but they don't have to share this information with the people who are using their services.* High-risk settings will be required to monitor and report on these policies to the provincial government.*

Many organizations of healthcare experts believe that it is not enough. The Canadian Medical Association (CMA) and the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA), which are the organizations that represent physicians and nurses across Canada, released a statement that they “are joining the call for mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations for health care workers.”*

Similarly, the Ontario Medical Association (OMA) shared a news release stating their belief that all health-care workers in the province should be required to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19.* Also referring to mandatory vaccination for healthcare workers, the Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario (RNAO) said that “Nurses stand with science and for patients. This is why we call for mandatory COVID-19 vaccination.”*

I hope that this information validates your concerns. Another thing to consider is that laws do change and evolve with time. Your question has been raised at a number of different tables, and we expect that the information that we shared here will change in the coming weeks. We will let you know when it does!

Sources:

1. <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-primer-guide-developing-human-rights-policies-and-procedures/2-organizational-responsibility-preventing-and-addressing-human-rights-issues>
2. <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/editorials/2021/08/06/workers-right-to-privacy-must-not-rump-the-right-to-health-care.html>
3. https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/directives/vaccination_policy_in_health_settings.pdf
4. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1000750/ontario-makes-covid-19-vaccination-policies-mandatory-for-high-risk-settings>
5. <https://www.cma.ca/news-releases-and-statements/cma-and-cna-call-mandatory-covid-19-vaccinations-health-care-workers>
6. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/healthcare-vaccination-1.6105937>
7. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58264006>

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