

Answering Your Questions about COVID-19

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Question 1: Does the COVID-19 vaccine work on the variant from India?

There is still a lot of unknown information about the B.1.617 variant, also known as the Indian variant. As of right now, health experts say there is no evidence that the approved vaccines won't work against it.

According to Raywat Deonandan, an epidemiologist with the University of Ottawa, the variant may diminish vaccine efficacy, "at least a little bit," because that is what we have seen with the variants of concern so far.

We do know that this variant has a double mutation on the spike protein gene, which our current COVID-19 vaccines target. Deonandan compares the coronavirus's spike protein to the license plate on a car, with vaccines giving our cells that plate number so they know to keep it out when they see it. "But if the license plate has changed, will the cell still recognize the car?" he said. "So the question is: Has an entire digit on the plate changed, or is it just a smudge on the corner?"

Deonandan added that the mRNA vaccines, like those by Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech, seem to be adept at catching different versions of the virus by targeting many aspects of the spike protein. "So, they may say: 'Look out for all license plates beginning with the letter B,' rather than this specific license plate," he said.

According to Alain Lamarre, an immunology and virology professor at the Institut national de la recherche scientifique in Quebec, noted that adapting mRNA vaccines to new variants would be faster and easier than altering other types of vaccines.

Source:

1. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/covid-19-variant-of-interest-vs-variant-of-concern-what-does-it-mean-1.5398083>

Question 2: Do I register for my second dose of the vaccine, or do they email me?

If you schedule your appointment through the province's online booking system, you will need to book appointments for both doses together to make sure you get the second dose at the right time.

Some public health units have chosen not to use the province's online booking system, including Halton Region, Peel Region, York Region, and more. See which public health units are using their own system by clicking [here](#). These locations may give you instructions on scheduling your second appointment during your appointment to get your first dose.

After you are vaccinated, staff will give you a paper and electronic receipt to confirm you got the vaccine. The receipt will also give you instructions for scheduling your second dose if you have not already done so. For some vaccine locations, you must keep the receipt from the first dose and bring it to your second appointment. Make sure to check the requirements of where you got the first dose.

Currently, you cannot book a second dose appointment by itself through the province's online booking system. The province is working to make this available.

If you are turning 55 or older in 2021, you may be able to book an appointment for a second dose through a participating pharmacy. Click [here](#) to see the list of participating pharmacies. You may need to provide information about your first dose (for example, what vaccine you got, where you got it, and when you got it).

Sources:

1. <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/get-covid-19-vaccine>
2. <https://www.cp24.com/news/which-covid-19-vaccine-booking-system-is-your-public-health-unit-using-1.5347069>
3. <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/vaccine-locations>

Question 3: Can I ask staff for proof of their vaccine?

There is no legal requirement for anyone to show clients proof of vaccination as it would be an invasion of privacy. At the moment, people who work in high-risk congregate living settings and select congregate care settings are able and encouraged to get vaccinated under Phase Two of [Ontario's COVID-19 vaccination plan](#). However, the Government does not mandate or require anybody in Canada to get a vaccine.

Homecare agencies may have requirements for their employees to be vaccinated. You can talk to the homecare agency that provides your PSW support and ask if the company has a mandatory requirement for their employees to be vaccinated.

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 is provided by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

If you contact the Long-Term Care Action Line, an Independent Complaints Facilitator (ICF) will be assigned to help you address your concern or complaint. The Long-Term Care Action Line may be contacted 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>.

Question 4: I have a surgery coming up, does that make me a priority? I am deaf and have no personal support workers coming in.

I recommend that you speak with your doctor about if you qualify for vaccination based on the reason for your upcoming surgery. According to Phase Two of [Ontario's COVID-19 vaccination plan](#), people who are eligible to be vaccinated due to a health condition will be contacted by their healthcare provider, such as a family doctor or specialist.

There is a list of highest-risk and high-risk health conditions that make someone a priority for vaccination in Ontario, which you can read [here](#). The webpage notes that this list is not exhaustive. Health care practitioners will use their best judgement to vaccinate patients whose health conditions are not on the list but may put them at similar or greater risk as the conditions which are on the list.

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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