

The Omicron Variant & Vaccine Boosters

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What information do we know about the Omicron variant?

On November 24, 2021, the first case of the new Covid-19 variant was reported to the World Health Organization. Originating in Botswana and another case seen in South Africa, on December 1, 2021 the first case of Omicron was detected in the USA, and since then we have seen more cases emerging.

It is estimated that the Omicron variant will likely spread more easily than the original SARS-CoV-2 virus. However, it is unknown at this time if it will spread quicker than the Delta variant. The CDC is warning that even if vaccinated, we are likely to still see it spread to asymptotically from individual to individual.

Because so little is known about this variant at this time, the CDC is recommending to still follow regular Covid-19 protocols until more information is known:

- Get Vaccinated
- Wear a mask
- Keep 6 feet apart from other individuals
- Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated spaces
- Get tested if any inkling that you may have the virus
- Wash your hands thoroughly and often
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Clean and disinfect
- Monitor your daily health

Currently we are being told that the vaccines are expected to protect against severe illness, hospitalization and deaths due to infection with the Omicron variant. However, [breakthrough infections](#) in people who are fully vaccinated are likely to occur. The recent emergence of Omicron further emphasizes the importance of vaccination and boosters.

Current Covid-19 booster information

As of December 2, 2021, Ontario announced that they will be lowering the eligibility age for the Covid-19 vaccine booster to 50 years of age and up, and will began offering the booster to additional high-risk individuals. These changes will begin on Monday December 13, 2021 at 8:00am. Individuals aged 50 and over will be eligible to schedule their booster dose appointment through the [COVID-19 vaccination portal](#), by calling the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre, through Indigenous-led vaccination clinics, [select pharmacies](#) and primary care settings. Appointments will be booked for approximately six months (168 days) after a second dose.

In addition, individuals receiving dialysis (hemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis) are eligible to receive a third dose of the Covid-19 vaccine if it has been 56 days since their second dose. The province is also recommending re-vaccination with a new COVID-19 vaccine primary series post-transplantation for individuals who receive hematopoietic stem cell transplants (HSCT), hematopoietic cell transplants (HCT) (autologous or allogeneic), and recipients of CAR-T-cell therapy, due to the loss of immunity following therapy or transplant.

Ontario is set to further expand eligibility for booster doses in January. These explanations will be based on age and risk, with a time frame of six to eight months from the second dose.

Where can children ages 5-11 get the vaccine?

The following list of where children ages 5-11 can get vaccinated is from [the city of Toronto's website](#)

City-run immunization clinics

You can book your COVID-19 vaccination appointment at clinics in Toronto using the province's [online registration system](#) or by calling the vaccine booking line at 1-833-943-3900.

Toronto hospital and health teams' vaccination clinics

- [Centre for Addition and Mental Health \(CAMH\) Vaccine Clinic](#)
 - Appointments and walk-ins available
- [Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood & Community Health Centre](#) – Mid-West OHT
 - By Appointment only
- [Humber River Hospital Vaccine Clinic](#)
 - Drop-ins available
 - Crossroads Plaza – drop-ins available
 - Black Creek Community Health Centre – drop-ins available
- [Michael Garron Hospital](#) – East Toronto Health Partners
 - By appointment only
- [Regent Park Community Health Centre](#) – Downtown East Toronto OHT
 - By appointment only
 - Individual must live in the following postal codes: M5A, M5B, M4Y, and M4X
- [Scarborough Health Network](#) – Scarborough OHT

- [Sherbourne Health](#) – Downtown East Toronto OHT
 - o By appointment only
 - o Individual must live in the following postal codes: M5A, M5B, M4Y and M4X
- **University Health Network** (clinic information will be made available soon)

Participating Pharmacies

There are more than 450 participating pharmacies in the City of Toronto offering Covid-19 vaccination for children. Most pharmacies book appointments ahead of time and some allow walk-ins.

Please call or visit the pharmacy's website to review eligibility criteria and check if you need an appointment or if walk-in (first come, first served) vaccinations are available.

- [Shoppers Drug Mart](#)
- [Rexall](#)

You must bring a valid Ontario health (OHIP) card or other form of valid government-issued identification with you to the appointment.

Find a pharmacy in your neighbourhood using the [Covid-19: Vaccine Clinic Locations map](#).

School mobile clinics

A mobile school clinic model has been developed in partnership between Team Toronto partners, Toronto Public Health (TPH) and the city's four public school boards. TPH is working to bring Covid-19 vaccinations or access to nearby vaccinations to all public schools in the city.

Parents/guardians and the children will receive notice from their school when a clinic is hosted. Specific school vaccine clinic details will be sent in a letter from principals, for their school only.

Family health teams and physicians/paediatricians

In total, there are more than 130 health teams, physicians and paediatricians providing Covid-19 vaccinations in their clinic. Doctors will contact their patients directly if they are participating and will direct you on how to book your appointment.

Specialized accommodations/clinics

For children ages 5-17, SickKids can help coordinate their Covid-19 vaccination appointment and offer specialized services including drive-through vaccination and the availability of Child Life Specialists and paediatric vaccinators. Visit sickkids.ca/vaccineconsult to make a booking to speak with a Registered Nurse. If you need assistance booking an appointment, please call 437-881-3505 or toll free at 1-888-304-6558

Homebound vaccinations

Children between five 5 and 18 years old living with medical, physical, cognitive or psychosocial needs/conditions that prevent them from visiting a local clinic, pharmacy, or their care provider may get the Covid-19 vaccination in their home.

First, contact your child’s physician or homecare service to see if they offer home vaccination. If they do not, they will complete the Homebound Covid-19 Vaccination Referral Template form and send it to Toronto Paramedic Services (TPS). TPS will call you and confirm your eligibility and, if confirmed, schedule a date and time for a Community Paramedic to visit and complete the child’s in-home vaccination.

If you have questions after speaking with your child’s physician, you may contact Toronto Paramedic Services by:

E-mail: homevaccination@toronto.ca

Phone: 416-397-4322 (select option 2)

Learn more at [How to Get Vaccinated – Homebound Persons](#)

Sources:

- 1: [Omicron Variant: What You Need to Know | CDC](#)
- 2: [COVID-19: Children & Vaccines – City of Toronto](#)
- 3: [Ontario Accelerating Booster Eligibility to Adults Aged 50+ | Ontario Newsroom](#)

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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