

Answering Your Questions about the Vaccine

This document was prepared 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 1: Do any of the vaccines protect against the UK variant, and other Variants of Concern (VOC)?

There is still not enough evidence to confirm that any of the authorized vaccines protect against COVID-19 variants.

According to the Government of Canada, “data about the efficacy of authorized mRNA COVID-19 vaccines (Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, Moderna COVID-19 vaccine) and viral vector-based COVID-19 vaccine (AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine) against Variants of Concern (VOC) is evolving. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) will continue to monitor the evidence and update recommendations as needed.”

This same document also noted: “There is no conclusive evidence on the protection of either one or two doses of currently authorized vaccines against potential new variants of the virus.” This was said in the context of the two mRNA COVID-19 vaccines, Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna. This same source says that research is still being done to determine how variants of the virus impact the efficacy, effectiveness, and safety of a vaccine. However, this is a research priority, so hopefully, we will have a clear answer soon.

Sources:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/national-advisory-committee-on-immunization-naci/recommendations-use-covid-19-vaccines.html>

Question 2: Can I get 2 different vaccines? For example, one at the community centre and one at the pharmacy?

No. The different vaccines work against the same virus, but the vaccines are not the same. Each vaccine has different ingredients, so they can't be mixed with each other. The Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccines require two doses because there is research which shows that these vaccines are more effective after the second dose. However, this only works when you get two doses of the same vaccine.

As of March 10th, the rule is that people in Ontario will have to wait 4 months in between receiving the first and second doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccines. This is due to a limited supply of vaccines in Canada.

It is ideal to get the second dose at the same location where you got your first dose because that site would know your information, when you got the vaccine, and other important information on your file.

For information on when & how to register for the vaccine, visit your local public health website. If you don't know which public health unit you are in, and/or to find the link to your local public health website, click here:

<https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx#16>.

All vaccinations available through pharmacies require an appointment to be made in advance. As of March 12th, over 325 pharmacy sites, including Shoppers Drug Mart, Rexall and independent pharmacies, will offer the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine to eligible Ontarians between the ages of 60 and 64 in Toronto, Windsor-Essex, Kingston, Frontenac, and Lennox & Addington. Visit <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/get-covid-19-vaccine> to find a participating pharmacy and contact that pharmacy to book an appointment.

The City of Toronto will open three COVID-19 immunization clinics beginning March 17th for residents born in 1941 or earlier. Beginning March 12th, eligible residents will be able to register for appointments at the City's clinics using the Province's online system.

If you are in Toronto and you have your first dose appointment scheduled, but you have not been vaccinated yet, the appointment for your second dose will be made for you when you receive your first dose.

Sources:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/national-advisory-committee-on-immunization-naci/recommendations-use-covid-19-vaccines.html#b9>

<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/60628/ontario-pharmacies-and-primary-care-settings-to-begin-offering-covid-19-vaccinations>

<https://www.peelregion.ca/coronavirus/vaccine/getting-the-vaccine/>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/health/covid-vaccine-two-doses-guidelines-1.5873856>

<https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-protect-yourself-others/covid-19-vaccines/>

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