

COVID-19 Vaccine FAQ

Is the vaccine safe?

As of December 2020, both the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines have been approved for use by Health Canada, and are safe, effective and will save lives. Vaccines go through many clinical trials, which provide important information on their safety and effectiveness. Once a vaccine is approved and in use, vaccine safety is continuously monitored.

How does the vaccine work?

The vaccine allows our bodies to produce protection (such as antibodies) against the COVID-19 virus. This immune response protects us from getting infected if the real virus enters our bodies. The vaccine uses a new method (messenger RNA – mRNA, the genetic code for a capsule protein of the virus) to help our bodies do this – it does not include the live virus. You cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine.

How is the vaccine given?

The vaccine is given by an injection into the muscle of the arm and in a two-dose series. Based on recommendations from B.C. public health experts, the World Health Organization, and what we've seen in other places, the second dose is given about 35 days after the first.

When will I get vaccinated?

The Ministry of Health has developed a [four-phased approach](#) to ethically and equitably distribute the COVID-19 vaccine, with priority groups first. The province will give updates soon about when the next groups will be eligible for their vaccine. We know many people in B.C. are very eager for the vaccine – we appreciate your patience and understanding.

Why should I get vaccinated?

The vaccine will help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in B.C. Vaccines save lives by preventing disease, especially for people most likely to have severe illness. This is especially important for disabled people who see caregivers regularly and/or have conditions that might make it more difficult to maintain distance from those outside their household, wear a mask, or wash their hands regularly. If enough people get vaccinated, it makes it difficult for the disease to spread. This gives everyone protection, or what is called community (herd) immunity. We hope that as more people in B.C. get vaccinated, we can return to activities that haven't been possible during the pandemic.

How well will the vaccine protect me?

Results from the clinical trials of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have shown to provide 94-95% protection against symptomatic COVID-19 infection, beginning two weeks after the second dose. Published studies show that strong protection (up to 90%) is achieved even two weeks after the first dose. The second dose is a booster dose for long-term protection.

Once I get vaccinated, how long do I have to follow physical distancing and other public health measures (where possible when accessing health care services)?

Provincial orders and guidelines will still remain in place for everyone, regardless if you have received the vaccine, until we can vaccinate enough people. After you are immunized, it will still be important to do your best to wash your hands regularly, follow physical distancing guidelines, wear a mask, and isolate away from others when sick.