

## COVID-19 Vaccine Information Sheet

Please read this information sheet carefully and ensure all your questions have been answered by a health care provider before receiving the vaccine.

### What is COVID-19?

- COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), recognized for the first time in December 2019 and declared a global pandemic in March 2020.
- The virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly passed from an infected person to others when the infected person coughs, sneezes, sings, talks or breathes.
- Infected people can spread the infection even if they **do not** have symptoms.
- Some people infected with the virus have no symptoms at all, while others have symptoms that range from mild to severe.
- [Symptoms of COVID-19](#) can include cough, shortness of breath, fever, chills, tiredness, and loss of smell or taste.
- Individuals with mild symptoms may feel unwell for a long time after a COVID-19 infection.

### How does the COVID-19 vaccine protect against COVID-19 infection?

- The vaccine causes the body to produce **antibodies** to help prevent you from becoming sick if you are exposed to the COVID-19 virus.
- **Two** doses of the mRNA Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty COVID-19 vaccine can be 95% effective at protecting against symptomatic illness.
- **Two** doses of the mRNA Moderna Spikevax COVID-19 vaccine can be 86-94% effective at protecting against symptomatic illness.
- **Two** doses of the non-replicating viral vector vaccine AstraZeneca Vaxzevria and COVISHIELD) COVID-19 vaccine can be 62% effective at protecting against symptomatic illness.
- **One dose** of the non-replicating viral vaccine (Janssen) COVID-19 vaccine can be 66% effective at protecting against symptomatic illness.
- It is important to note that the vaccine does not contain the virus so **you cannot get COVID-19 infection from the vaccine.**

### Who can and cannot receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

- Public health officials will provide information on which [individuals](#) are able to receive the vaccine at this time.
- **Table 1** below has specific information regarding those who can and those who should not receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

**Table 1: Summary Table of Those Who Can Receive the COVID-19 Vaccine, Those Who May Be Offered the COVID-19 Vaccine, and Those Who Should Not Receive the COVID-19 Vaccine**

	INDIVIDUALS WHO CAN RECEIVE the COVID-19 Vaccine	INDIVIDUALS WHO MAY BE OFFERED the COVID-19 Vaccine	INDIVIDUALS WHO SHOULD NOT RECEIVE the COVID-19 Vaccine
		Individuals in this category who are at high risk of exposure to COVID-19 infection should consult with their health care provider to discuss vaccination.	
<b>Age</b>	12 years of age and over ( <b>Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty</b> ) 12 years of age and over ( <b>Moderna Spikevax</b> ) 18 years of age and over ( <b>AstraZeneca Vaxzevria, COVISHIELD, Janssen</b> )	12 to 15 years of age ( <b>Pfizer/BioNTech/Moderna</b> )	11 years of age and younger ( <b>Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty</b> ) 11 years of age and younger ( <b>Moderna Spikevax</b> ) 17 years of age and younger ( <b>AstraZeneca Vaxzevria, COVISHIELD, Janssen</b> )
<b>Currently experiencing symptoms that could be related to COVID-19</b>			You should <b>not</b> be vaccinated if you have <a href="#">symptoms that could be due to COVID-19</a> . If you are feeling unwell, complete the <a href="#">COVID-19 Self Assessment Tool</a> or call 811 to arrange testing.
<b>Current COVID-19 infection or past COVID-19 infection</b>	You can be vaccinated if you are no longer infectious (10 days since first symptom or 10 days since positive test) and your symptoms have resolved.		You cannot be vaccinated while infectious (within 10 days of your first symptom or positive test). Attending a clinic while you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 may cause spread of infection to others.
<b>Pregnancy</b>	Currently pregnant or planning to become pregnant before receiving both doses of COVID-19 vaccine.		
<b>Breastfeeding</b>	Currently breastfeeding.		
<b>Allergy to polyethylene glycol (Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty and Moderna Spikevax).</b> Found in some cosmetics, skin care products, laxatives, cough syrups, bowel preparation products for colonoscopy, and some foods and drinks. <b>Allergy to polysorbate 80 (AstraZeneca Vaxzevria, COVISHIELD, and Janssen).</b> Found in medical preparations (e.g. vitamin oils, tablets, and anti-cancer agents), cosmetics. <b>Allergy to Tromethamine (Moderna Spikevax)</b> Found in some medications injected to do tests (contrast media) as well as other medications taken by mouth or injection, and some creams and lotions.			If you have been told you are allergic to polyethylene glycol (PEG)*, polysorbate 80, Tromethamine, or have had an allergic reaction from an unknown cause, you should not be vaccinated until it is determined to be safe by an allergist or other health care provider.
<b>You had a severe reaction or allergic reaction to a previous dose of COVID-19 vaccine</b>			If you had a serious or allergic reaction to your first dose of COVID-19 vaccine, you should not be vaccinated until it is determined to be safe by an allergist or other health care provider.
<b>Medical conditions</b> Talk with your health care provider prior to vaccination if you are unsure about your medical conditions		Problems with your immune system, history of autoimmune conditions or currently taking medications/treatments.	

\* The vaccine has not been studied well enough in the “**Generally Should Not Receive**” category. Therefore it is recommended to discuss with your primary health care provider if you are at high risk of exposure to COVID-19.

\* Polyethylene glycol (PEG) can rarely cause allergic reactions and is found in products such as medications, bowel preparation products for colonoscopy, laxatives, cough syrups, cosmetics, and skin creams, medical products used on the skin and during operations, toothpaste, contact lenses and contact lens solution. PEG also can be found in foods or drinks, but is not known to cause allergic reactions from foods or drinks.

**In addition to the information in *Table 1*, tell the health care provider if:**

- **You have fainted or felt faint after receiving past vaccines or medical procedures.** Your health care provider may recommend that you receive the vaccine lying down to prevent fainting.
- **You have a bleeding disorder or are taking medication that could affect blood clotting.** This information will help the health care provider prevent bleeding or bruising from the needle.

**How is the vaccine administered?**

The vaccine is given as an injection into the muscle of the upper arm and will require two doses. It is important to receive both doses of the vaccine to ensure optimal protection from COVID-19 infection.

**What are the side effects of the vaccine?**

Side effects are expected and can indicate the vaccine is working to protect you from COVID-19 infection. Side effects can develop in the days following the vaccination and can include one or more of the following:

- Pain, tenderness, and swelling where the needle was given
- Tiredness
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Joint pain
- Nausea/vomiting/diarrhea
- Chills
- Fever
- Enlarged lymph nodes (swollen glands)
- Dizziness, decreased appetite, excessive sweating, itchy skin or rash

**If you experience any of the following symptoms in the 4-28 days after immunization with AstraZeneca Vaxzevria/COVISHIELD, you should seek immediate medical attention or call 811 or 911.**

- Persistent and severe headache, seizures, blurred vision
- Focal neurological symptoms (Movement changes or sensation changes that affects specific functions, for example, weakness or loss of muscle control on the left or right side of the face, left or right arm, or even a small area such as the tongue, difficulty moving any part of your body). Problems with speech, vision, and hearing can also occur.
- Shortness of breath
- Chest or severe abdominal pain or pain that does not go away
- New swelling, pain, or color change of an arm or a leg
- Bruising or pin point rash under the skin

**Myocarditis and Pericarditis**

- There have been very rare reports of myocarditis and/or pericarditis following immunization with an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine product.
- Myocarditis is inflammation of the heart muscle and pericarditis is inflammation of the lining around the heart.
- Myocarditis and pericarditis has been reported more frequently in males, those under 30 years of age, and after a second dose.
- The majority of cases have been mild and individuals have recovered quickly.
- Seek immediate medical attention if you develop symptoms, which may include chest pain, shortness of breath, or the feeling of a fast, pounding or fluttering heartbeat.
- These symptoms typically occur within a week after the receipt of an mRNA vaccine dose.
- **As a precaution, it is recommended that individuals who experienced myocarditis and/or pericarditis after a first dose of an mRNA vaccine should wait to get their second dose until more information is available.**

Allergic reactions are rare but can happen after receiving a vaccine. The immunization clinic staff are prepared to manage an allergic reaction should it occur. Symptoms of an allergic reaction include:

- Hives (bumps on the skin that are often very itchy)
- Swelling of your face, tongue or throat
- Difficulty breathing

### **What public health measures have been put in place to safely provide immunizations during COVID-19?**

Health care providers are being very careful to prevent the spread of COVID-19 when offering immunizations.

Examples of safety measures include the following:

- You will be asked about [any COVID-19 symptoms](#) when you arrive at the clinic. People with symptoms of COVID-19 should not attend the clinic.
- You will be asked to wear a mask while at the clinic and stay at least 6 feet away from others (except those in your household bubble).
- Staff will be wearing masks and cleaning their hands and work areas before and after each client.

### **What should you do before coming to the clinic?**

- Wear a short-sleeve shirt or top with sleeves that are easy to roll up.
- To prevent feeling faint while being vaccinated, have something to eat before coming to the clinic.
- Bring your non-expired MCP card.
- Bring your immunization record with you and/or download the [CANImmunize](#) app to keep track of this and other vaccines.

### **What should you do after receiving the vaccine?**

- **Wait for at least 15 minutes.**
- **Inform a health care provider** at the clinic if you feel unwell.
- **Call 9-1-1 right away if you develop any serious symptoms or symptoms of an allergic reaction.**
- **Continue to follow the recommendations of local public health officials** to prevent spread of COVID-19. Such as wearing a mask, staying at least 6 feet away from others and limiting social contacts.
- **Keep your immunization record** with information about the COVID-19 vaccine in a safe place.

### **When should I return for my second dose?**

- Two doses of COVID-19 vaccine will provide the best protection, the second dose should be booked at least 28 days and up to four months after the first dose.
- Research has shown that a longer dosing interval may increase and prolong the immune response to the vaccine.

### **What vaccine will I receive for my second dose?**

- An mRNA vaccine is **now preferred** as the second dose for individuals who received a first dose of the AstraZeneca Vaxzevria/COVISHIELD vaccine, based on emerging evidence of better immune response from this mixed vaccine schedule and to mitigate the potential risk of VITT associated with viral vector vaccines.
- For those who received an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty or Moderna Spikevax), the same mRNA vaccine should be offered as the second dose if possible. If you present to a clinic that does not have that vaccine available or you are unsure what vaccine you received as the first dose, either mRNA (Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty or Moderna Spikevax) vaccine can be offered.

If you decide to **complete the series with AstraZeneca Vaxzevria/COVISHIELD vaccine**, please consider the following information.

- **Effectiveness:** The same vaccine is generally used for all doses in a vaccine series because that is usually how the vaccine is studied by the vaccine companies. In clinical trials, the AstraZeneca Vaxzevria/COVISHIELD COVID-19 vaccine prevented 60% to 80% of sickness from COVID-19 starting two weeks after the second dose. There was an even greater protection against hospitalization and death from COVID-19.
- **Side Effects:** Most reactions such as a headache and tiredness after getting AstraZeneca Vaxzevria/COVISHIELD vaccine are mild or moderate and short-lived. These side effects are rarer and even milder after the second dose of the vaccine.
- **Safety:** A very rare but serious condition of blood clots combined with low levels of blood platelets (Vaccine-Induced Immune Thrombotic Thrombocytopenia, or VITT) has been reported following immunization with AstraZeneca Vaxzevria/COVISHIELD or COVISHIELD vaccines in Europe, the United Kingdom, and Canada. These rare cases of VITT mostly happen between 4 and 28 days after the AstraZeneca Vaxzevria/COVISHIELD vaccine. People who get an AstraZeneca Vaxzevria/COVISHIELD vaccine should monitor for symptoms like severe and constant headache, belly pain, and difficulty breathing from 4 days to 42 days after the vaccine. In Canada, after the first dose, there has been one case of VITT reported for every 55,000 doses of vaccine given. The rate of VITT after a second dose is not clear yet, but after giving about 9 million second doses of AstraZeneca Vaxzevria/COVISHIELD vaccine, the United Kingdom has reported 15 VITT cases. This is 1 case per 600,000 doses, which is much rarer than after first doses, however it is possible this could change over time.

#### **Completing the vaccine series with an mRNA vaccine:**

- **Effectiveness:** Most studies looking at giving an mRNA vaccine after a first dose of AstraZeneca Vaxzevria/COVISHIELD are not finished yet, but one small study from Spain showed that immune response was greatly improved, compared with no second dose, when Pfizer vaccine was given 8 or more weeks after a dose of AstraZeneca Vaxzevria/COVISHIELD vaccine. It is possible that using different vaccines might stimulate the immune system in different ways and provide a stronger immune response, but we don't yet have studies that clearly prove this.
- **Side Effects:** A trial from the UK showed that people who got the Pfizer vaccine 4 weeks after a dose of AstraZeneca Vaxzevria/COVISHIELD vaccine had more general reactions like fever and aches than those who received the same vaccine for their second dose. Most symptoms happened in the 2 days after immunization and went away on their own. In the study from Spain with AstraZeneca Vaxzevria/COVISHIELD and then Pfizer after 8 weeks, side effects were mild and went away on their own.
- **Safety:** There have been no cases of VITT reported in NL after receiving an mRNA vaccine. There are no safety signals from either the UK trial or the one in Spain that gave people an mRNA vaccine after an AstraZeneca Vaxzevria/COVISHIELD vaccine, however these trials were very small and there is less data on mixed vaccine series than on vaccine series with the same vaccine.

Currently, mRNA and AstraZeneca Vaxzevria/COVISHIELD vaccine are both available in Newfoundland and Labrador. Therefore those who wish to have a second dose with mRNA will not be delayed in receiving that vaccine. If a person chooses an mRNA vaccine for their second dose, they do not need to restart a series. If a person needs help with understanding the information above, they may contact a healthcare professional.

October 4, 2021