

COVID-19 VACCINE

What happens when I get the vaccine?

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What is being done to make sure I am safe when I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

- There are steps in place to protect your health and safety when you get the vaccine.
- Doctors and nurses will ask if you:
 - have any COVID-19 symptoms
 - had another vaccine, such as the flu shot, in the past 14 days (two weeks)
 - have had any serious allergic reactions in the past.
- When you go for your vaccine, everyone will wear a mask, wash their hands and try to stand six feet away from other people while waiting. Contact your doctor if you cannot wear a mask.
- If you are worried or have any questions, tell the person giving you the vaccine so they can help.
- Health care providers will watch for any serious side effects as people get the vaccine.



What should I do before coming to the vaccine clinic? What should I bring?

- If you would like an interpreter at your vaccine appointment, ask your doctor or care team to arrange it.
- Wear a comfortable, loose shirt that you can roll up to your shoulder.
- Bring your mask and wash your hands when you get to the clinic. Contact your doctor if you cannot wear a mask.
- Bring your health card or another form of ID (for example, passport or driver's licence). If you don't have ID, you can still get the vaccine. Speak to someone on your care team or to the person giving you the vaccine if you don't have ID.
- Bring a support person if you need one.
- Bring your yellow immunization card if you have one.
- Eat your meals as usual.



What should I do BEFORE I get the vaccine?

- Before getting the vaccine, tell the health care provider giving you the vaccine if you:
 - are not feeling well
 - have any COVID-19 symptoms
 - are pregnant
 - are breastfeeding
 - have fainted when you received other needles
 - are very afraid of getting needles (and tell them what might help you calm down)
 - have had an allergic reaction to a vaccine before
 - have had any other serious allergic reactions before
 - take anticoagulants (blood thinners)
 - have a weak immune system (for example, if you have HIV, hepatitis C, cancer or other serious illnesses)
 - have had another vaccine in the past 14 days.
- Even if any of the points in the above list apply to you, it doesn't automatically mean you can't get the vaccine. It is just good to talk to a health care provider first and make sure it is safe for you to get the vaccine.
- If it's your second dose of the vaccine, tell the person giving you the vaccine if you had any side effects after your first dose.
- Ask any questions you may have about the vaccine.



What will happen WHEN I get the vaccine?

- You will be asked to sign a form before getting the vaccine to show that you agree to get the vaccine and that all your questions have been answered. This is called giving consent. You can decide at any time to say no and not sign the form.
- A doctor or other health care provider will give you a needle in the top part of your arm, similar to the flu shot.
- The vaccine will work to build up your immune system and make it stronger.



What will happen AFTER I get the vaccine?

- After you get the vaccine, you will need to wait for 15 minutes to make sure you are feeling OK.
- If you have had any serious allergic reactions before, you will be asked to wait a bit longer to make sure that you are safe. You will be watched for any serious or unusual side effects, which are rare.

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- The health care team at the vaccine clinic is prepared to treat any immediate reactions that might happen.
- You might experience some of these common side effects:
 - sore arm
 - redness and swelling where you got the needle
 - headache
 - nausea and/or vomiting
 - mild fever or chills
 - sore muscles or joint pain
 - feeling tired.
- These side effects are normal and will go away.
- You will also be watched for any serious or unusual side effects, but these are rare. If you do have serious side effects, the doctors will look after you.
- If you get a mild to moderate allergic reaction (e.g., swelling, hives) within four hours of getting the vaccine, you should get checked out by an allergist before your second shot.
- If you are feeling worried or do not feel well, you should talk to your doctor or another member of the care team.
- You should not get any other vaccines for at least 28 days (four weeks) after your second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.



Can other problems develop after getting the vaccine?

- Vaccine-induced thrombotic thrombocytopenia (VITT) is a rare but serious blood disorder that can develop four to 28 days after getting the AstraZeneca or Janssen vaccines. It can cause blood clots, ICU admission and even death.
 - Because safety monitoring is so strict around these vaccines, scientists were able to notice this rare side effect and now doctors are able to recognize and treat it.
 - See the [FAQ info sheet](#) in this series for more information about VITT and the AstraZeneca and Janssen vaccines.



How will I know if I am having a reaction to the vaccine? When should I get help from a doctor?

- Serious reactions or side effects from the vaccine are rare.
- Call 911 or talk to your doctor or another member of your care team right away if you have these symptoms:
 - trouble breathing
 - hives
 - swelling of the face or mouth
 - a very pale face
 - serious drowsiness
 - fever
 - seizures
 - feelings of pins and needles or numbness in your body.
- If you received your first dose of AstraZeneca four to 28 days ago, be aware of symptoms that may indicate VITT. This is a rare condition, but if you experience the following symptoms in that period, please go to your nearest emergency room:
 - severe headache that does not go away
 - seizure
 - difficulty moving part of your body
 - new blurry or double vision that does not go away
 - difficulty speaking
 - shortness of breath
 - severe chest, back or abdominal pain
 - unusual bleeding or bruising
 - new reddish or purplish spots or blood blisters
 - new severe swelling, pain or colour change of your arm or leg.



How many shots of the COVID-19 vaccine do I need?

- Two shots of either the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines provide protection against COVID-19 for the general population (and are considered a full vaccination), but a third shot is now recommended for all people age 18 and older.

This is because:

- Vaccine protection can decrease over time.
- People with immuno-compromising conditions require a third dose given eight weeks following their second dose and a fourth dose (booster) 168 days after their third dose.
- Two shots are less effective against the new Omicron variant of COVID-19. A third shot provides better protection and can help stop the spread of the Omicron variant.
- Rapidly rising case counts increase the risk of exposure and transmission.
- Check out the Ontario government's COVID-19 vaccine website for the most up-to-date information on third doses, including the timing for the booster or third dose <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/getting-covid-19-vaccine#booster-doses>



Do I still need to be careful after I get the vaccine?

- If you get one of the vaccines that requires two doses, you are not fully protected against COVID-19 after your first dose because it takes time for your body to be ready to fight the COVID-19 virus. You need the second dose of the vaccine to be fully protected.
- If you get the vaccine that requires only one dose, it will still take up to four weeks for you to become fully protected.
- It will take time to vaccinate everyone. Until most people are vaccinated, the COVID-19 virus can still be passed around.
- Even after you get the vaccine, you need to follow public health guidelines:
 - Wear a mask.
 - Wash or sanitize your hands often.
 - Stay six feet apart from other people when possible.
 - Avoid crowds.

If you have questions, please talk to your doctor.

This information sheet is not intended to be a resource for people who require screening for COVID-19 or who are experiencing a mental health crisis. If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, please call 911 immediately or go to your nearest emergency department.

For more information, visit www.camh.ca/covidvaccine

Adapted with permission from CAMH's Azrieli Adult Neurodevelopmental Centre