
SUBJECT: Exceptions to Extended Dose Intervals for COVID-19 Vaccines
Date: March 30, 2021
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To: Primary Care Providers, Hospitals, Oncology Programs
From: Dr. Nicola Mercer, Medical Officer of Health & CEO

On March 3, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) issued a strong recommendation that, in the context of limited vaccine supply, the dose interval for approved two-dose COVID-19 vaccines be extended up to four months.¹ This recommendation has been adopted in Ontario and other provinces/territories. The rationale behind extending the dose interval is to maximize the number of people who benefit from the protection offered by a single dose.²

While extending the dose interval is believed to provide the greatest population health benefit, emerging evidence suggests that there are subpopulations who may have a suboptimal immune response to a single vaccine dose.^{3,4} Ontario's Vaccine Clinical Advisory Group has reviewed this evidence and, on March 26, issued recommendations regarding which populations should receive their second vaccine dose at a shorter interval.

The following groups were recommended to receive their COVID-19 vaccine according to the dose interval in the product monograph:

- Transplant recipients (including solid organ transplants and hematopoietic stem cell transplants)
- Individuals with malignant hematologic disorders and non-hematologic malignant solid tumours **receiving active treatment** (chemotherapy, targeted therapies, immunotherapy), **excluding** individuals receiving solely hormonal therapy or radiation therapy.⁵

Older adults who do not fall into the categories above are recommended to follow the extended dose interval. This recommendation will be reassessed as new evidence emerges and as vaccine supply forecasts are updated.⁵

Action Required from Health Care Providers

If you have any patients in your practice who meet either of the above criteria, please notify WDGPH by submitting the attached form and faxing to WDGPH's reportable disease fax line at **1-855-934-5463**. For multiple patients you may submit a list directly from your EMR. Please include:

1. Name and contact info for patients as well as reason for referral
2. Contact name and number from the referring healthcare provider for follow up
3. Indicate "For Second Dose Exception"

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If your patient has already received vaccine dose #1:

WDGPH will follow up directly with your patient and book them in for a second vaccine dose, as appropriate based on the timing of the first dose.

If your patient has not yet received vaccine dose #1:

Your patient is eligible for to be vaccinated as part of Phase 2 on the basis of their health condition. WDGPH will follow up directly with your patient and book their first- and second-dose appointments.

References:

1. National Advisory Committee on Immunization. NACI rapid response: Extended dose intervals for COVID-19 vaccines to optimize early vaccine rollout and population protection in Canada. 2021 Mar 08 [cited 2021 Mar 29]. Available from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/national-advisory-committee-on-immunization-naci/rapid-response-extended-dose-intervals-covid-19-vaccines-early-rollout-population-protection.html>
2. Quach C, Deeks S. COVID-19 vaccination: why extend the interval between doses?. JAMMI [Internet]. 2021 Mar 25 [cited 2021 Mar 29]; e20210323. Available from: <https://jammi.utpjournals.press/doi/full/10.3138/jammi-2021-0323>
3. Boyarsky BJ, Werbel WA, Avery RK, Tobian AA, Massie AB, Segev DL, Garonzik-Wang J. Immunogenicity of a Single Dose of SARS-CoV-2 Messenger RNA Vaccine in Solid Organ Transplant Recipients. JAMA [Internet]. 2021 Mar 15 [cited 2021 Mar 29]; E1-E3. Available from: <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2777685>
4. Monin-Aldama L, Laing AG, Muñoz-Ruiz M, McKenzie DR, del Molino del Barrio I, Alaguthurai T, et al. Interim results of the safety and immune-efficacy of 1 versus 2 doses of COVID-19 vaccine BNT162b2 for cancer patients in the context of the UK vaccine priority guidelines. MedRxiv [Internet]. 2021 Mar 17 [cited 2021 Mar 29]. Available from: <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.03.17.21253131v1>
5. Vaccine Clinical Advisory Group. Recommendations on Exceptions to Extended Dose Intervals for COVID-19 vaccines. 2021 Mar 26 [cited 2021 Mar 29]. Available from: https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/vaccine/COVID_19_medical_exceptions_vaccine_dose_intervals.pdf

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