

COVID-19 Vaccine

This fact sheet provides basic information only. It is not intended to provide or replace medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. You should talk to a health care professional about health concerns and illness.

What is COVID-19?

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Most people infected with the virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. However, some will become seriously ill and require medical attention. Older people and those with underlying medical conditions like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, or cancer are more likely to develop serious illness. Anyone can get sick with COVID-19 and become seriously ill or die at any age.

COVID-19 affects different people in different ways. Most infected people will develop mild to moderate illness and recover without hospitalization.

Most common symptoms include fever, cough, tiredness, loss of taste or smell. Less common symptoms include sore throat, headache, aches and pains, diarrhea, a rash on skin, discolouration of fingers or toes, and red or irritated eyes.

Serious symptoms include difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, loss of speech or mobility, or confusion, and chest pain.

Seek immediate medical attention if you have serious symptoms.

People with mild symptoms who are otherwise healthy should manage their symptoms at home.

On average it takes 5–6 days from when someone is infected with the virus for symptoms to show, however it can take up to 14 days.

How is COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 is spread directly from one person to another when infected people cough or sneeze. It can also be spread indirectly through contact with surfaces that are infected with the virus (e.g., toys, cell phones, and doorknobs). COVID-19 can spread to others even before symptoms appear and before someone knows they are getting sick.

How can you lower your risk of getting sick?

To protect yourself and others, especially during respiratory illness season:

1. Keep up to date on your COVID-19 vaccines and flu shots
2. Consider wearing a tight-fitting, well-constructed mask in indoor public settings, especially if you are at higher risk of severe infection
3. Monitor daily for signs of illness and stay home when you are sick
4. Wash your hands often with soap and warm water or alcohol-based hand rub
5. Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze
6. Regularly clean high touch surfaces
7. Optimize indoor air quality

Why get vaccinated?

Immunization is the best way to protect you and your family against serious diseases.

Receiving an updated vaccine is expected to offer additional protection against SARS-CoV-2 infection and severe COVID-19 disease. The strain(s) in the updated vaccines are likely to be more closely related to circulating strains, and the additional dose is expected to increase the immune response that has waned over time.

Ontario will have two mRNA COVID-19 vaccines for the 2024/2025 season, Moderna and Pfizer, both targeting the Omicron KP.2 variant. Moderna will be the vaccine available for children 6 months to 11 years of age.

Who is eligible to be vaccinated?

Individuals aged 6 months and older may receive a COVID-19 vaccine at the same time as routine vaccinations or any other time if it has been a recommended 6 months since their last dose or confirmed COVID-19 infection.

What to expect after vaccination?

Many people who receive a COVID-19 vaccine have no side effects or adverse events. For those that do, side effects are usually mild and last a few days. The most common side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine are:

- Redness, swelling, and soreness at the injection site
- Headache
- Mild fever
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Joint pain
- Muscle aches

Severe allergic reactions (i.e. anaphylaxis), although rare, are a risk with the administration of any vaccine. It is recommended that you remain in a clinic setting for 15 minutes following immunization as this is the most common timeframe when anaphylaxis will occur. Individuals with a history of allergies may be instructed to wait 30 minutes to ensure adequate monitoring.

For more information visit:

- Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health: wdgpublichealth.ca
- Ontario Ministry of Health: ontario.ca - covid-19
- Immunize Canada: www.immunize.ca