

COVID-19 Vaccine Bulletin #41

Quick Updates

- Review Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health's (WDGPH) vaccination progress: [COVID-19 Vaccination Report](#). The vaccination dashboard now includes individuals who are receiving third doses.
- **Townhall Meeting on February 3rd:** Join representatives from the Chief Medical Officer of Health's office, Public Health Ontario, the OCFP, and the OMA on February 3rd, 2022, from 8:00 A.M-9:00 A.M. for a townhall meeting. This session is to support health care providers in offering guidance to parents about the safety of vaccines, schools, and childcare in relation to COVID-19. This session will review the current guidance on public health measures such as masking, daily screening, testing, and extracurricular activities. The session will also highlight current initiatives to support increased vaccination among 5-11-year-olds including school-based clinics, educational resources, and expert support. [Register and submit questions in advance here.](#)
- **Use of Pfizer:** On January 25th, the Ministry of Health has eliminated the requirement to prioritize its use for the 12-29 age group. The province has confirmed a stable supply of the adult Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty vaccine. The Moderna Spikevax vaccine remains in stable supply in Ontario and can continue to be administered broadly. While vaccine supply is currently stable, the administration must continue to be based on principles including the effectiveness of both vaccines, interchangeability, and minimizing wastage of these globally critical products.
- The Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health (PCMCH) is recommending that [pregnant and breastfeeding individuals](#) get vaccinated against COVID-19. Pregnant individuals that are COVID positive will have mild symptoms and fully recover; however, some will develop moderate to severe COVID-19 illness and need to be hospitalized. mRNA Vaccines (including booster doses) are highly effective at reducing the risk of any variant of COVID-19 infection.
- **Vaccine for under-5 Children:** In December, Pfizer-BioNTech announced their plans to submit data to the FDA on a [3-dose study](#) in the first half of 2022, after initial trials of the 3 µg 2-dose regimen given to 2- to 4-year old's did not produce as much of an immune response as it did in other age groups.
- **Omicron-Specific Vaccines:** on Tuesday, January 25th, Pfizer and BioNTech [announced](#) they have begun a study to evaluate a SARS-CoV-2 vaccine based on the Omicron variant among adults aged 18 to 55 years. The study will enroll up to 1,420 healthy adults to [test the Omicron-based shot](#) as an initial (third shot) or secondary (fourth shot) booster dose or as primary vaccinations in previously unvaccinated individuals.

Vaccine Status for Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph

89% of residents 5+ received at least one dose	85% of residents 5+ received two doses
% Received at least two doses in: Well. County = 84 Duff. County = 82 City of Guelph = 87	Total number of doses given in primary care office pharmacy and Partner-Led Clinic = 498,471

Age Group	First Dose	Second Dose	Booster Dose
60+	99%	99%	80%
50-59	91%	89%	55%
40-49	89%	88%	45%
30-39	92%	89%	39%
20-29	84%	81%	31%
12-19	86%	82%	9%
5-11	56%	26%	0%

Updates to Ministry of Health Guidance

[COVID-19 Vaccination in Pregnancy & Breastfeeding Clinical Support Tool](#) (updated January 25, 2022)

[COVID-19 Vaccine Administration Errors and Deviations Guidance](#) (updated January 25, 2022)

[COVID-19 Vaccination Third Dose Recommendations](#) (updated January 13, 2022)

[COVID-19 Medical Exemptions to vaccination](#) (updated January 12, 2022)

[COVID-19 Vaccine Storage and Handling Guidelines](#) (updated January 5, 2022)

Updated NACI recommendations on the use of COVID-19 vaccines in children 5 to 11 years of age

On January 25, 2022, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) strengthened its recommendation regarding the use of COVID-19 vaccines in children 5 to 11 years of age. NACI now recommends that a complete series of Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty vaccine (10 mcg) **should be offered** to children 5 to 11 years of age who do not have contraindications to the vaccine, with a dosing interval of at least 8 weeks between the first and second doses. Previous NACI guidance indicated that the vaccine ‘may be offered.’ The updated recommendation reflects greater evidence regarding the effectiveness and safety of the vaccine.

NACI also recommends that individuals 5-11 years of age who are moderately to severely immunocompromised should receive a 3-dose primary series of an authorized mRNA COVID-19 vaccine. This aligns with [guidance](#) that has previously been provided by Ontario’s Ministry of Health.

Use of PAXLOVID and sotrovimab as outpatient therapies for COVID-19

On January 17th, [Health Canada approved the oral antiviral PAXLOVID](#) (nirmatrelvir and ritonavir) for adults with mild-moderate COVID-19 infection who are at risk of progressing to severe disease. [Ontario is distributing a limited supply of PAXLOVID and sotrovimab to designated sites across the province](#) and prioritizing individuals who are at higher risk for severe outcomes from COVID-19 infection. This includes:

- Immunocompromised individuals (PDF) aged 18 and over regardless of vaccine status
- Unvaccinated individuals aged 60 and over
- Unvaccinated First Nation, Inuit and Métis individuals aged 50 and over
- Unvaccinated individuals aged 50 and over with one or more risk factors.

[Guidance from Ontario's Science Advisory Table](#) provides direction for health care providers in identifying eligible patients who could benefit from antiviral treatment. Eligible patients should be referred as soon as possible to a [clinical assessment centre](#). PAXLOVID and sotrovimab must be given within 5 or 7 days of symptom onset, respectively.

No drug, including PAXLOVID™, is a substitute for vaccination. Vaccination remains the most important tool in preventing serious illness from COVID-19 infection. Both the Public Health Agency of Canada and Health Canada continue to strongly recommend vaccination for all eligible Canadians, including those who are pregnant, may become pregnant or are breast-feeding.

For detailed information on authorized vaccines and treatments in Canada, visit the [COVID-19 vaccines and treatments](#) portal.

NACI Recommendations on Booster Doses for Adolescents 12-17 years old

On January 28, NACI provided guidance on the use of booster COVID-19 vaccine doses in adolescents 12-17 years of age. NACI has recommended:

- A **booster dose** of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine **may be offered** ≥6 months after completion of a primary COVID-19 vaccine series to adolescents 12 to 17 years of age:
 - With an underlying medical condition at high risk of severe illness due to COVID-19 (including those who are immunocompromised and who received a three-dose primary series);
 - Who are residents of congregate living settings (e.g., shelters, group homes, quarters for migrant workers, correctional facilities);
 - Who belong to racialized and/or marginalized communities disproportionately affected by COVID-19.(Discretionary NACI Recommendation)

At this time, NACI is not making recommendations for booster doses for the general adolescent population, 12 to 17 years of age. Guidance from the Ministry of Health regarding the implementation of NACI's recommendations in Ontario is expected to be available shortly.

Vaccine Effectiveness against the Omicron Variant in Ontario

A pre-print study on medRxiv ([Buchan et al.](#)) examined the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines against symptomatic infection with the Omicron and Delta variants. The study used a logistic regression model based on Ontario data to estimate the vaccine effectiveness (VE) of two or three doses by time since the latest dose. Top-line results include:

- After 2 doses, VE against Delta infection declined steadily over time but recovered to 97% (CI 96-98%) ≥ 7 days following an mRNA third dose.
- After 2 doses, VE against Omicron infection declined from 36% (CI 24-45%), 7-59 days following immunization, to close to 0% after ≥ 180 days.
- VE against Omicron infection was 61% (CI 56-65%) ≥ 7 days following an mRNA third dose.

The same study also provided estimates regarding the vaccine effectiveness (VE) of two or three doses against severe outcomes (hospitalization or death). VE against severe Omicron outcomes was over 80%, ≥ 180 days following a second dose. This increased to 95% (CI 87-98%), ≥ 7 days following an mRNA third dose.

Vaccine Effectiveness and the BA.2 Sub-lineage

Data reported in a recent [UK Health Security Agency technical briefing](#) provide estimates regarding the vaccine effectiveness (VE) of two or three doses against symptomatic disease caused by the BA.1 and BA.2 sub-lineages of the Omicron variant:

- ≥ 25 weeks after a second dose, VE was 9% (CI 7-10%) for the BA.1 sub-lineage vs. 13% (CI -26-40%) for the BA.2 sub-lineage.
- ≥ 2 weeks after a third dose, VE was 63% (CI 63-64%) for the BA.1 sub-lineage vs. 70% (CI 58-79%) for the BA.2 sub-lineage.

As of January 25, 2022, 51 cases of the BA.2 sub-lineage have been reported in Canada with the earliest case reported in December 2021. Public Health Ontario has posted an [up-to-date risk assessment](#) regarding the BA.2 sub-lineage.

Reliable Sources of Information on Vaccines

[WDGPH Vaccine Administration Training](#)

[Public Health Agency of Canada](#)

[Government of Ontario](#)

[Ministry of Health](#)

[Public Health Ontario](#)

[Centre for Effective Practice \(CEP\)](#)

[World Health Organization](#)

[COVID-19 Studies from the World Health Organization Database](#)

[Centres for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)

[National Advisory Committee on Immunizations \(NACI\)](#)

[Confused about COVID? Family doctors answer your questions](#), the Department of Family and Community Medicine, University of Toronto, and Ontario College of Family Physicians came together to create a user-friendly Q&A to assist the public understand the current guidelines.

More information about how to book an appointment is available:

<https://wdgpublichealth.ca/your-health/covid-19-information-public/covid-19-vaccine-information/covid-19-vaccine-children-ages>