

Ministry of Health

What you need to know about your COVID-19 vaccine appointment

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Note: This document is an updated combination of documents previously titled “What you need to know before your COVID-19 vaccine appointment” and “Vaccine After Care Sheet”.

This guidance provides basic information only. This document is not intended to provide or take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, or legal advice.

You have been identified as eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Please read this document to know what to expect for your upcoming vaccine appointment.

Preparing for COVID-19 Vaccination

What do I need to bring to my appointment?

- Your health card/Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) card. If you do not have an OHIP card, bring another form of government-issued photo identification such as a driver’s license, passport, Status Card, or other provincial health cards. You can still get vaccinated if you do not have an OHIP card.
- Your immunization record, if available, to keep track of your COVID-19 vaccine.
- An allergy form, if required
- Any assistive devices you may need (e.g., scooter, wheelchair, cane) and items to help you pass the time (e.g., cell phone, book).
- Reading glasses and/or hearing aid, if required
- Your mask
- A support person, if required (e.g., interpreter, someone to help you during the vaccination).

What do I need to do to prepare for my appointment?

- Read the [Vaccine Information Sheet](#) and follow up with your health care provider if you have any questions about your medical history or allergies.
- Take your regular medication and eat your meals as usual. Make sure you have something to eat before coming to the clinic to prevent feeling faint while being vaccinated.
- Wear a loose-fitting top or a t-shirt so that the health care provider can easily access your upper arm for the vaccination.
- Do not wear any scented products.
- **If you have [symptoms of COVID-19](#), you should not attend the clinic. Call the clinic and follow their instructions.**
- Do not arrive more than 10 minutes before your appointment to avoid crowding at the clinic.
- You may need to wait outside before your appointment. Please dress for the weather.

What can I expect when I arrive at my appointment?

Health care providers are being very careful to prevent the spread of COVID-19 when providing immunizations. Clinic staff will take every precaution to ensure your health and safety during your visit. Public health measures, such as physical distancing, hand sanitization, mask-wearing will be in place at clinics. All health care providers, patients, other staff, and visitors need to follow all public health measures in the clinic. Please read and follow any signs or instructions provided at the clinic.

- You will be asked to provide your OHIP or Status card (or any government-issued photo ID if no OHIP card) to confirm your appointment.
- You will be asked to answer a series of questions to see if you have signs or symptoms associated with COVID-19 before entering the clinic.
- You will be asked questions about your medical history (for example about any allergies you have)
- You will be asked to wear a mask while at the clinic, to clean your hands, and practice physical distancing from others (at least 2 metres/6 feet).

- You will be asked to stay for 15-30 minutes after you receive the vaccine to monitor for any unexpected changes in your health or allergic reactions.

What if I have allergies?

The health care provider at the vaccine clinic will ask about allergies. Check the [COVID-19 Vaccine Information Sheet](#) for more details on the vaccine ingredients, including polyethylene glycol, tromethamine and polysorbate.

- If you have had an allergic reaction (including a severe reaction like anaphylaxis) to a previous dose of a COVID-19 vaccine or any of the components, you must consult with an allergist/immunologist before getting vaccinated to see if the vaccine can be given to you safely.
- If you have had an allergic reaction within 4 hours and/or anaphylaxis that occurred with a vaccine or injectable medication that does not contain a component or cross-reacting component of the COVID-19 vaccines, you can receive the COVID-19 vaccine. You will be asked to wait in the clinic for 30 minutes after your vaccine.
- If you have a history of significant allergic reactions and/or anaphylaxis, to any food, drug, venom, latex or other allergens not related to the COVID-19 vaccines, you can receive the COVID-19 vaccines. You will be asked to wait in the clinic for a minimum of 15 minutes after your vaccine.
- If you have allergy issues like runny noses, sneezing, itchy nose and eyes, asthma and eczema you can receive the vaccine. You will be asked to wait at the clinic for a minimum of 15 minutes after your vaccine.

For more detailed recommendations for individuals with allergies, please consult [Vaccination Recommendations for Special Populations](#) guidance document

What if I have other medical conditions?

If you are pregnant, breastfeeding, have an autoimmune condition, or are immunocompromised due to disease or treatment, you may need to speak with your health care provider prior to immunization. Please consult the [Vaccination Recommendations for Special Populations](#) guidance document for further information. You should speak to your health care provider about whether the vaccine is right for you based on your medical condition.

What if I take blood thinners?

If you have a bleeding problem, bruise easily, or use a blood-thinning medicine (e.g. warfarin or heparin) you can receive the vaccine.

What if I fainted the last time I got a vaccine or I have a fear of needles?

If you have fainted, or became dizzy with previous vaccinations or procedures, or if you have a high level of fear about injections, you should still get the vaccine. Tell the health care provider at the clinic so that appropriate supports can be offered. You can bring a person with you for support.

COVID-19 Vaccination After Care

What should I do right after receiving the vaccine?

- After your vaccine, you should stay in the clinic for 15 to 30 minutes. This is to make sure you do not have an allergic reaction. Allergic reactions do not happen often. Staff giving vaccines know how to treat allergic reactions. Let staff know if you notice a skin rash, swelling of your face or mouth, problems breathing, and/or feel unwell.
- If waiting inside the clinic, be sure to leave your mask on and remain at least 2 metres/6 feet away from others.
- Use the alcohol-based hand rub to clean your hands before leaving the clinic.
- Do not operate a vehicle or other form of transportation for at least 15 to 30 minutes after being vaccinated (as advised by the health care provider) or if you are feeling unwell.
- If someone is picking you up from the clinic, they should get you after the 15 minute waiting period in the clinic is finished. Your support person or driver should follow the direction of clinic staff regarding where to meet/collect you.

What should I expect in the next few days?

- You may have some side effects from the vaccine. They should go away in a few days.

- Common expected side effects include: pain, redness or swelling where the needle was given. A cool, damp cloth where the vaccine was given may help with soreness.
- Other symptoms may include: tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain, and fever. If needed, pain or fever medication (such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen) may help with pain or fever.
- Serious side effects after receiving the vaccine are rare. However, should you develop any of the following adverse reactions within three days of receiving the vaccine, seek medical attention right away or call 911 if you are severely unwell:
 - hives
 - swelling of the face or mouth
 - trouble breathing
 - very pale colour and serious drowsiness
 - high fever (over 40°C)
 - convulsions or seizures
 - other serious symptoms (e.g., “pins and needles” or numbness).
- The AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD vaccine is associated with a very rare side effect known as [Vaccine-Induced Prothrombotic Immune Thrombocytopenia \(VIPIT\)](#). If you develop any of the following symptoms after receiving the vaccine please seek immediate medical attention:
 - shortness of breath
 - pain in the chest
 - swelling or coldness in an arm or leg
 - persistent abdominal pain
 - severe or worsening headaches or blurred vision
 - multiple small bruises, red or purple spots or blood blisters under the skin.
- If you are concerned about any reactions you experience after receiving the vaccine, contact your health care provider. You can also contact your [local public health unit](#) to ask questions or to report an adverse reaction.

Things to remember after you receive the vaccine

- **Continue wearing a mask, staying at least 2 metres from others and limiting/avoiding contact with others outside of your household.**

- Do not receive any other vaccines from now until at least 28 days after any dose of your COVID-19 vaccine (unless considered necessary by your health care provider).
- If you are planning to become pregnant within the 28 days of receiving a dose, you should speak to your primary care provider.
- Keep this sheet (or other immunization record) AND your printed COVID-19 Immunization receipt from the vaccination today in a safe place and bring it with you for follow-up COVID-19 vaccinations as instructed by the vaccination clinic (i.e. for your second dose, depending on the vaccine administered).