Health Canada has approved four COVID-19 vaccines for use in Canada: Moderna, Pfizer-BioNTech, AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD and Janssen. The first three are available for use in Nova Scotia at this time. All approved COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective.

What is coronavirus (COVID-19)?

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). COVID-19 was seen for the first time in December 2019. It has spread around the world to cause a pandemic. New more infectious versions of the virus called variants are also emerging. The virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly passed from an infected person to others when the infected person coughs, sneezes, sings, talks or breathes. Some people with COVID-19 have no symptoms but can spread the disease to others.

Symptoms of COVID-19 can include cough, shortness of breath, sneezing and runny/stuffy nose, fever and chills. Some people infected with the virus have no symptoms at all. Others have symptoms that range from mild to severe.

How does the COVID-19 vaccine protect against COVID-19?

The vaccine causes our body to produce protection (such as antibodies) to help keep us from becoming sick if we are exposed to the COVID-19 virus. Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines use a new method called messenger RNA (mRNA) to help our body protect itself against the virus. A large study showed that when people were given two doses of the vaccine, 94% were less likely to become sick with COVID-19.

The AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD vaccine uses a fairly new method of vaccine technology which is called a non-replicating viral vector vaccine. The vector virus (called adenovirus), is changed to carry COVID-19 genes but is altered so it cannot cause disease. The vaccine stimulates our body to provide protection against the COVID-19 virus without us becoming sick. Data suggests that the AstraZeneca vaccine was slightly less effective (82%) than the mRNA vaccines following a second dose 12 or more weeks after the first.

There have been very rare cases of unusual blood clots accompanied by low levels of blood platelets after vaccination with the AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD COVID-19 vaccine. This very rare adverse event has not been seen following the Moderna or Pfizer BioNTech vaccine.
When to call 911 or seek medical help:
If you have any of the following symptoms after receiving the AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD COVID-19 vaccine please call 911 or seek medical help right away and make sure you mention you have received the vaccine:
• shortness of breath
• chest pain
• stomach pain that won’t go away
• leg swelling
• a sudden and severe headache
• a headache that won’t go away and is getting worse
• blurred vision
• skin bruising (other than the area where you were vaccinated) or, reddish or purplish spots, or blood blisters under the skin

If you get any of the above symptoms, they are most likely to occur between days 4 and 14 after receiving the AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD vaccine.

The frequency of this adverse event is not known with certainty but appears to occur between 1 per 100,000 to 1 per 250,000 people vaccinated. Approximately a quarter of people who develop this condition may die, however this may be modified with early diagnosis and treatment. Cases have occurred in vaccine recipients of all ages and there do not appear to be any risk factors.

Given Nova Scotia’s current COVID-19 disease activity, the benefits of getting vaccinated earlier with the AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD vaccine, rather than waiting for mRNA vaccine, (Pfizer BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine) appear greater than the risk of this very rare side effect for those who are 40 years of age and older. However, you may choose to wait to receive an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine if that is your preference.

This adverse event has not been reported in persons who receive either mRNA vaccine. Currently the wait time for either the Pfizer BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine is dependent on age; all persons aged 40-54 years will be eligible to receive mRNA vaccine by the third week of May 2021.

You cannot get a COVID-19 infection from a COVID-19 vaccine.

Who can get the COVID-19 vaccine at this time?
Public health officials will provide information on when people are able to get the vaccine. This is based on several factors including your age and the amount of vaccine available. You can find more information at novascotia.ca/vaccine-plan about when you will be able to get the vaccine.

Cancel and rebook your vaccine appointment if:
• You tested positive for COVID-19 and have been directed to self-isolate for 14 days
• You have even slight signs and symptoms that could be COVID-19, go online to book a COVID-19 test (novascotia.ca/coronavirus/symptoms and-testing/#811) or call 811 if you are unable to book a test online
• You are a close contact of a known case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days
• You have traveled outside Nova Scotia, PEI and Newfoundland and Labrador in the past 14 days and must self isolate*
• You have been to an announced exposure site, and have been directed to self-isolate
• You are awaiting COVID-19 test results and have been directed to self-isolate
* Rotational workers are required to isolate upon return until they receive a negative COVID test after which, they may attend any routine medical appointments including receiving their COVID-19 vaccine.

Updated April 29, 2021

For information visit: novascotia.ca/vaccine-plan
IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE CORONAVIRUS VACCINE

Who can get the COVID-19 vaccine?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELIGIBILITY</th>
<th>CAN GET</th>
<th>MAY BE ABLE TO GET</th>
<th>SHOULD NOT GET</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderna vaccine: 18 years of age and older</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pfizer vaccine: 16 years of age and older</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<tr>
<td>AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD vaccine: between 40 and 64 years of age</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling unwell with symptoms that could be COVID-19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>❌</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have had a COVID-19 infection:</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td>❌</td>
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<tr>
<td>But feel better and are no longer infectious (cleared by Public Health)</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Could spread COVID-19 to others or still feel unwell from a recent infection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have received monoclonal antibodies for treatment of COVID-19 (need to provide date when received to health care provider) Each situation will be decided on a case by case basis to ensure you receive protection from the vaccine.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Breastfeeding or pregnant: currently or planning to be before getting both doses of vaccine. Learn more here.</td>
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<td>Allergies:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Polyethylene glycol (PEG) can rarely cause allergic reactions. It is found in products such as medications, bowel preparation products for colonoscopy, laxatives, cough syrups, cosmetics, skin creams, dermal fillers, medical products used on the skin and during operations, and contact lens solution.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pfizer or Moderna</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tromethamine (trometamol or Tris) is a component in contrast media, oral and parenteral medications.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Moderna</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polysorbates are found in other medications (e.g. vaccines, vitamins, oils, anticancer treatment and medication tablets) and some creams and ointments.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Astra-Zeneca</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had a severe reaction to a previous dose of COVID-19 vaccine, including allergic reaction</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Problems with immune system:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problems with your immune system from disease or treatment</td>
<td>❌</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Autoimmune conditions</td>
<td>❌</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Was vaccinated in the past 14 days (not a COVID-19 vaccine)</td>
<td>❌</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

If you identify with any of the situations in the ★ MAY BE ABLE TO GET ★ column, you should discuss your personal risks of COVID-19 and potential benefits and risks of getting the vaccine with your doctor, nurse practitioner, specialist, clinic nurse or pharmacist familiar with your medical history before deciding whether getting the vaccine is right for you.

In addition to the above information, tell the health care provider if:

- You have fainted or felt faint after getting past vaccines or medical procedures. Your health care provider may recommend that you get the vaccine lying down to prevent fainting.
- You have a bleeding disorder or are taking medication that could affect blood clotting. This information will help the health care provider prevent bleeding or bruising from the needle.
- You have had an anaphylactic reaction to another vaccine or to an injectable medication or product. You can get the vaccine but will be observed in the clinic for 30 minutes after vaccination in case of an unexpected allergic reaction.

For information visit: novascotia.ca/vaccine-plan

Updated April 28, 2021
COVID-19 VACCINE

Everything you need to know before getting the COVID-19 vaccine

When should I return for my second dose of vaccine?

A booster dose will be given four months after your first dose. It is very important to get the second dose of Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD vaccines for them to work well. Your second dose is automatically booked when you book your first dose. Follow the instructions to ensure you get the second dose at the right time.

Bring your vaccine record with the name of the COVID-19 vaccine and date you received it with you for the second dose. Tell the person providing the second dose if you experienced any side effects after the first dose.

What steps are in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 at vaccine clinics?

Health care providers are being very careful to prevent the spread of COVID-19 when offering the COVID-19 vaccine. Examples of extra safety measures include:

• When you arrive at the clinic sanitize your hands.
• When you arrive at the clinic you will be asked about any COVID-19 symptoms or if you are under any direction to be self-isolating. **People with symptoms of COVID-19 or who answer YES to the above questions should cancel their appointment and rebook.**
• You will be asked to wear a mask while at the clinic, as well as to sanitize your hands, and to stay at least two metres (6 feet) from others (except those you live with or a support person).
• Staff will also be wearing personal protective equipment and will be cleaning their hands before and after each client.
• Be sure to read and follow any signs or instructions provided.

What should I do before coming to the clinic for my appointment?

Wear a short-sleeve shirt or top with sleeves that are easy to roll up.

Have something to eat before coming to the clinic to prevent feeling faint while being vaccinated. It is also important to drink water and stay hydrated.

Bring a clean well fitted mask to wear while you’re in the building.

Bring your Nova Scotia Health card if you have one.

Bring your vaccine record, if you have one.

For information visit: novascotia.ca/vaccine-plan

Updated April 28, 2021
What should I do right after getting the vaccine?

• Stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting the vaccine. You may be asked to wait for 30 minutes if there is concern about a possible vaccine allergy.

• If you have a support person with you, you may be asked to wait in the clinic or outside the clinic (such as in your vehicle). If you are asked to wait outside, let the health care provider at the clinic know if you do not have a warm, dry place to wait.

• Tell a health care provider at the clinic if you feel unwell while waiting. If waiting in your vehicle, honk your horn to get their attention.

• If waiting inside the clinic, be sure to leave your mask on and stay at least two metres away from anyone who is not part of your household.

• Use the alcohol-based hand rub to clean your hands before leaving the clinic.

Symptoms of an allergic reaction include:

- hives (bumps on the skin that are often very itchy)
- swelling of your face, tongue or throat
- or difficulty breathing

Clinic staff are prepared to manage these events if they happen.

Tell a health care provider at the clinic right away if you have any of these symptoms.
What are the side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine? What can I expect over the next few days?

People can have side effects in the two weeks after getting the vaccine with most of the common side effects occurring in the first day or two. Although these side effects are not serious, they may make you feel unwell for about one to three days. They will go away on their own. These types of side effects are expected and can show the vaccine is working to produce protection in your body:

- Pain, swelling or redness where the needle was given. Place a cool, damp cloth or wrapped ice pack over where the vaccine was given
- Tiredness, headache, muscle pain, joint pain, nausea, vomiting, chills, fever or enlarged lymph nodes (swollen glands) in your underarm. Pain or fever medication (acetaminophen or ibuprofen) may relieve the pain or fever. Check with your healthcare provider if you need advice about medication.

Serious side effects after getting the vaccine are rare. However, should you develop any serious symptoms that could be related to unusual blood clots accompanied by low levels of blood platelets after AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccination (see above) or symptoms related to an allergic reaction, call 911 right away. Symptoms of an allergic reaction include:

- Hives (bumps on the skin that are often very itchy)
- Swelling of the face, tongue or throat
- Difficulty breathing

If you have any concerns about the symptoms you develop after getting the vaccine, contact your health care provider for advice. If you still need to get your second dose, tell the person providing the second dose about any side effects you experienced with the first dose.

**THINGS TO REMEMBER**

Even after you have received both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, you must continue to follow public health guidance to prevent spread of COVID-19.

**Continue to follow these measures until we know more about how well the vaccine prevents infection and reduces the risk of transmission.**

- wear a mask
- stay at least two metres from others
- limit contact with others outside your household
- clean your hands regularly
- stay home when you feel unwell and book a COVID-19 test using the self-assessment tool
- limit non-essential travel and self-isolate after returning to Nova Scotia from travel

**Do not** get any other vaccines (except for your second COVID-19 vaccine) until at least 28 days have passed after a dose of COVID-19 vaccine (unless considered necessary by your health care provider).

**If you are planning to become pregnant,** delay this until at least 28 days have passed after the second dose. Keep this sheet or other immunization record in a safe place.

**Do not** get a TB (tuberculin) test until 4 weeks after your COVID-19 vaccine.

Keep this sheet or other immunization record in a safe place.

You can cancel or reschedule your appointment in your booking confirmation email or by calling 1-833-797-7772.

**If you have questions, call your health care provider or visit novascotia.ca/vaccine-plan.**