



COVID-19 VACCINE INFORMATION

mRNA COVID-19 vaccines for individuals aged 6 months and older

? How do mRNA COVID-19 vaccines protect against COVID-19?

Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines use mRNA (messenger RNA) to deliver instructions for the body to make proteins (called antigens) like those found on the virus that causes COVID-19. These antigens trigger an immune response that helps the body build protection against COVID-19. mRNA vaccines offer short term protection against COVID-19 infection and longer lasting protection against severe COVID-19 disease.

It takes approximately 14 days after receiving an mRNA vaccine for your immune system to respond; slightly longer if you are older or immunocompromised.

? What types of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines are available?

Original mRNA vaccines target the original strain of the virus that causes COVID-19. At this time, original vaccines are used to complete the primary series.

Bivalent COVID-19 vaccines target two different strains of COVID-19 - the original strain and Omicron. At this time, bivalent vaccines are only used for booster doses.

? How safe are mRNA COVID-19 vaccines?

There is now a lot of real-world data showing that mRNA COVID-19 vaccines are safe and well tolerated, including among children, people who are pregnant or breastfeeding, or immunocompromised.

? What are the side effects of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines?

Common side effects of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines include:

- Pain, swelling, or redness where the needle was given
- Tiredness
- Headache
- Muscle or joint pain
- Fever or chills
- Nausea or vomiting

Other side effects of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines are uncommon, rare, or very rare. They may include:

- Swelling of the lymph nodes in your underarm
- Severe allergic reaction
- Myocarditis (swelling of the heart muscle) and/or pericarditis (swelling of the lining around the heart). For more information, a myocarditis and pericarditis fact sheet is available [online](#).
- Bell's palsy (weak or paralyzed muscles in one side of the face – usually temporary)

? Is it safe to receive other vaccines before, after or at the same time as my COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. You can receive COVID-19 vaccines before, after or at the same time as any other vaccines.

? How many doses of mRNA COVID-19 vaccine should I get?

You should receive your primary series and any booster doses which are recommended for you. Your primary series are the first doses that build your body's baseline immune response. Booster doses are given after the primary series is completed and help to build back protection that may have decreased over time.

The number of doses recommended depends on which vaccine you receive, your age, and your other risk factors. For more information, check [online](#) or talk to your health care provider.



www.nshealth.ca/coronavirusvaccine



Before you receive an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine, tell your health care provider if:

- You have fainted or felt faint after getting past vaccines or medical procedures.
- You have a bleeding disorder or are taking medication that could affect blood clotting.
- You have had an anaphylactic reaction to a COVID-19 vaccine or any of its ingredients, or to another vaccine or injectable medication/product.
- You have been diagnosed with multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) or adults (MIS-A).
- You have a history of myocarditis and/or pericarditis or you were diagnosed with myocarditis and/or pericarditis following vaccination with a COVID-19 vaccine.



COVID-19 VACCINE AFTERCARE

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? After you receive 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 allergic reaction.
- Tell a health care provider at the clinic if you feel unwell while waiting.



In rare cases, people can faint or have an allergic reaction after getting a vaccine.

- Tell a health care provider at the clinic **right away** if you have any of these symptoms:
- Trouble breathing.
- Hives (bumps on the skin that are often very itchy).
- Swelling of your face, tongue, or throat.

**Or if these symptoms occur when you are at home:
CALL 911 RIGHT AWAY.**

? What can I expect over the next few days?

Most common side effects occur in the first few days and up to two weeks after getting the vaccine and should go away on their own. Side effects are expected and can show that the vaccine is working. Side effects include:

- 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 and/or 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.

Seek medical attention right away if you think you may be experiencing a rare but serious side effect:

- Bell's Palsy – weakness, drooping, or loss of feeling in the face, unexplained drooling, loss of taste on the front two-thirds of the tongue, inability to close eye on one side of the face.
- Myocarditis/pericarditis – trouble breathing, chest pain or pressure, unexplained sweating or cough, feeling of fast or abnormal heartbeat.

? When should I return for my next dose?

Completing your primary series and receiving any further doses for which you are eligible helps protect you against severe disease.

For more information, talk to your health care provider or check [online](#).

