



COVID-19 Vaccine

Frequently Asked Questions for Essential Workers

1. **The vaccines have different percentages of efficacy. Is one kind of vaccine better than the other? Is Pfizer better than Moderna?**

Both vaccines are similar and offer good protection from COVID-19.

- The Pfizer vaccine has 95% efficacy, 7 days after 2-doses of the vaccine.
- The Moderna vaccine has 94% efficacy, 14 days after 2-doses of the vaccine.

2. **What's the vaccine made out of? Any virus or human tissue cells in the vaccine?**

Both vaccines contain messenger RNA (active ingredient), some lipid molecules, salts, sugars and buffers. They do not contain preservatives, formaldehyde, thimerosal, aluminum, latex, antibiotics, attenuated or inactivated virus, animal or human cells.

3. **Who should not get the COVID-19 vaccine, and why?**

The only people who should not get the vaccine are those who have a known allergy to the vaccine ingredients. This includes polyethylene glycol (PEG), which is in both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccine, and tromethamine, which is in the Moderna vaccine. Anyone who has a severe reaction to their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine should not get their second, unless it is cleared by their allergist or health care provider.

4. **How can people who are allergic to the vaccine ingredients be protected?**

There are more vaccine products that will be reviewed by Health Canada. People who have allergies to ingredients to one vaccine product may be able to have another vaccine product. Until then, everyone still needs to practice the current infection prevention and control and public health measures (e.g. wearing masks, washing hands frequently and physical distancing).

5. **I understand that we don't know if the vaccine will prevent the transmission of COVID-19 to others. Should I still get vaccinated?**

Yes, because the vaccine will prevent you from getting sick or seriously ill from COVID-19. The vaccine is mainly for individual protection. As an essential worker, the Ontario government has



prioritized your safety first. After vaccination, you will still have to wear appropriate PPE when providing care to others. Research is ongoing to determine if the vaccine can stop transmission of the virus to others.

6. I heard that some people test positive after receiving their second dose of the vaccine. Did they get the virus from the vaccine?

The vaccine does not contain the coronavirus that causes COVID-19, and so it is not possible to get COVID-19 from the vaccine. It takes our body's immune system one to two weeks after the second dose of the vaccine to develop good immunity against COVID-19. A person may be exposed to the coronavirus before their body had time to build up immunity. With 95% efficacy, there is still a small chance some people may not develop good immunity from the vaccine, and get COVID-19. However, the vaccine may reduce the severity of illness if they do become infected.

7. If staff and essential caregivers are given two doses of the vaccine, do they need to continue with the weekly testing?

Our understanding right now is that the vaccine prevents people from getting sick with the coronavirus. The vaccine may also guard against severe illness if people do become infected. This is really important. But we do not know if the vaccine will prevent someone from being a carrier of coronavirus and infect others.

For now, staff and care providers still need to continue to wear PPE and take every precaution as before, including weekly testing for some, even after they are vaccinated. This may change in the future.

8. The Moderna and Pfizer vaccines require two doses and emphasize that the second dose is important. However, Quebec is now not giving the second dose due to a vaccine shortage, even though that is not how the vaccine was scientifically designed to work. How can I trust that I am safe getting a vaccine when I am hearing these mixed messages?

The Province of Quebec is giving their citizens a two-dose series. They are just delaying the second dose for some people to allow the Province to maximize vaccine coverage to vulnerable residents over the age of 70. In Ontario, two doses will be given within three to six weeks after the first dose.



9. This vaccine is so new, is it safer for me to wait to be vaccinated until more is known about the long-term effects of these vaccines so I can get the safest one?

A lot of work was started in coronavirus vaccine development after the SARS and MERS outbreaks. The mRNA technology has been in development for over 10 years. For the COVID-19 vaccines, scientists around the world are working together and sharing data. The vaccine has been tested in multiple clinical trials involving thousands of people to ensure that it is safe and effective. There were no shortcuts taken in vaccine approvals by Health Canada. Globally, more than 68.1 million doses of vaccine have been given in 56 countries (as of January 25, 2021). You cannot get a larger clinical trial than that.

While the COVID-19 vaccine is new and we don't know how long the immunity from the vaccine will last or if there are long-term consequences, we do have a long history of vaccines and immunization, and scientifically, long-term harm with vaccines is very rare. We also know that COVID-19 is a disease that can cause severe illness and death. For some people, once they have recovered from COVID-19, they may continue to have some long-term health effects from the disease. During this pandemic, more people are becoming infected and dying of COVID-19. This is why vaccines are so important. Vaccination is a personal choice you need to make for yourself.

10. What was the demographic makeup of participants in the vaccine trials? What was the sample size selection for: age, racialization, socio-economic background, gender and culture?

The vaccine clinic trials were conducted on volunteers, mainly in the United States. An estimated 36% of the participants identified as from communities of colour. However, the study did not collect data on socio-economic, gender and culture. See [Moderna vaccine product monograph](#), and [Pfizer vaccine product monograph](#), Table 6 for demographic characteristics.

11. How does this mRNA vaccine affect woman of reproductive age, for example, women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or who are thinking of getting pregnant?

Currently, there is no data about the safety and efficacy of the vaccines in pregnancy or during breastfeeding. People who are pregnant or breastfeeding should consult their health care provider about the potential vaccine benefits versus the risk of disease for themselves and their baby. For family planning, consider waiting one month after the vaccine series before trying for pregnancy.



12. We are hearing about very contagious coronavirus variants in the UK, Brazil and South Africa. How effective are the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines in recognizing and neutralizing the new variant virus?

The new variants do seem to spread more easily and quicker than other strains of the virus, which has led to more cases of COVID-19. Some of the new variants are now in Ontario too. This is why vaccination is so important. Scientists believe that current vaccines will still be effective against the variant, but they are working to confirm this.

13. Do I need a booster shot of the COVID-19 vaccine? If yes, how often?

If immunity following vaccination goes down, often a booster dose can be provided. More research is being done to determine if a booster dose is needed for COVID-19.