

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR CARE STAFF, SUPPORT STAFF AND MEDICAL STAFF WHO WORK IN LONG-TERM CARE**

Vancouver Coastal Health wants to thank you for your hard work and perseverance during this challenging year. You have truly been on the front lines of this pandemic, and there aren't words to express our gratitude for your dedication. Because of your vital role in caring for the most vulnerable in our community, you have been identified in a priority group for receiving COVID-19 vaccination. Below you will find the answers to commonly asked questions.

### **Which population groups have been prioritized?**

We are distributing vaccine through a phased approach. The first limited round of approximately 4,000 doses of vaccine are being administered to Lower Mainland health-care workers who work in long-term care homes and acute care. Vaccines will continue arriving each week in B.C. in increasing quantities, with targeted deployment for people in priority groups. The ordering of priority groups is based on recommendations from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization.

First priority groups will be:

- Long-term care residents and staff
- Health-care facility staff for COVID-19 patients
- Indigenous people living in rural or remote communities
- People living in shelters and people experiencing homelessness
- People over 80 years old

Second priority groups will be:

In spring 2021 after the first group, a second phase of vaccination will begin for:

- People aged 60 to 79, with a focus on the oldest people first
- Key frontline workers

### **How were the priority groups determined?**

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) released recommendations on key populations for early vaccination.

### **Why should I get vaccinated?**

The vaccine will help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in B.C. Vaccines save lives by preventing disease, especially for people most likely to have severe illness or die. If enough people get vaccinated, it makes it difficult for the disease to spread. This gives everyone protection – this is called “herd immunity.” We hope that as more Canadians get vaccinated, we can return to activities that haven't been possible during the pandemic.

### **Am I required to get vaccinated?**

While recommended, it is not mandatory for staff to receive the vaccine. Feeling worried or hesitant is completely normal when something is new, however we can be reassured that Health Canada has a thorough approval process that ensures the safety of the many vaccines and medicines we take routinely. This rigorous process is used before any vaccines are approved for use in Canada.

### **Should I get vaccinated if I already contracted COVID-19 in the past?**

If you have previously contracted COVID-19 you do not need to attend a clinic at this time, as you will be vaccinated at a later date.

### **Is there a cost to getting vaccinated?**

Both required doses of the COVID-19 vaccine will be free for everyone in British Columbia.

### **INFORMATION ON COVID-19 VACCINE**

*The following information pertains to the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, which will be the first to be distributed in BC, as well as the Moderna vaccine, which is pending Health Canada approval. These vaccines each require special transportation, storage, and handling specifications.*

### **Who should receive the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine?**

Health Canada has authorized the use of this vaccine in individuals over 16 years of age. The vaccine will be provided to population subgroups based on federal and provincial eligibility criteria. These criteria are listed at [www.gov.bc.ca/covid-19/vaccines](http://www.gov.bc.ca/covid-19/vaccines)

### **Is the vaccine approved for use in Canada?**

As of Dec. 9, 2020, the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine has been approved for use in Canada.

### **How does the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine work?**

The vaccine enables our body to produce protection (such as antibodies) against the COVID-19 virus. This immune response protects us from getting infected if the real virus enters our bodies. The vaccine uses a new method (messenger RNA – mRNA, the genetic code for a capsule protein of the virus) to help our bodies make protection against the virus. You cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine.

### **Is the vaccine safe?**

Vaccines are products that help protect you from viruses that cause illnesses like COVID-19. Canada has one of the most rigorous regulatory systems to authorize new vaccines for use. Health Canada's authority ensures:

- Laboratory and clinical studies provide evidence of product safety and effectiveness
- Manufacturing process meets a high standard
- The product meets the highest standards of quality

During vaccine development, vaccines are first tested in animals before testing in humans. Testing in humans is done over three phases of clinical trials. These clinical trials provide crucial information on vaccine safety and effectiveness. Once a vaccine is approved and in use, vaccine safety is continuously monitored to identify serious side effects. Learn about the types of vaccine Health Canada is reviewing [here](#).

### **How is the vaccine given?**

The vaccine is given by an injection (0.3 mL) into the muscle of the arm. For the vaccine to work best, you need to get two doses: a single dose and then a second dose 21-28 days later.

**How well will the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine protect me?**

Results from the clinical trials have shown to provide 95% protection against COVID infection, seven days after the second dose. In those 65 years of age and older, vaccine efficacy is above 94%. It may take until 7 days after the second dose of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to develop optimal protection against COVID-19.

**How will you track who has received the vaccine and when they need to return for a second dose?**

Public Health staff will be tracking those who've received a first or second dose of the vaccine, but will also be relying on people to make note of their first vaccination and when to come back for a follow-up vaccination. Those who receive a first dose will need to wait at least 21-28 before getting a second vaccination.

**What happens if I cannot receive my second dose 21-28 days after the first dose?**

If administration of the second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine is delayed, the second dose should be provided as soon as possible, though a delay between doses does not result in a reduction in final antibody concentrations.

**What if I received another vaccine (not a COVID-19 vaccine) in the past 14 days?**

It is recommended that you wait two weeks from the last vaccine, prior to receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

**How long do I need to wait to receive other vaccines (not a COVID-19 vaccine) that I am due for?**

Wait a period of at least 28 days after the administration of the complete two-dose vaccine series of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine before the administration of another vaccine.

**Once vaccinated, can I still transmit the virus to others, even if I don't get sick?**

At the moment, we do not have enough information about this issue. We don't know how long the protection lasts from COVID-19 vaccines or how well they work in preventing asymptomatic infection or reducing transmission of the virus. Thus, PPE is recommended for immunized individuals as it may be possible to transmit the COVID-19 virus even after vaccination.

**I got the Pfizer vaccine for my first dose. Can I get a second dose from a different manufacturer, such as Moderna?**

No. Though studies are underway, at the moment we don't have information on the interchangeability of the COVID-19 vaccines. Individuals are recommended to complete the vaccine series with the same COVID-19 vaccine product.

**Who should not receive the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine?**

The following individuals should not receive the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine at this time:

- Those under 16 years of age
- Serious allergy to polyethylene glycol (PEG)

- Life-threatening reaction to a previous dose of the COVID-19 vaccine or to any other part of the vaccine
- Immune system weakened by disease or medical treatment
- Have an autoimmune disease
- Are pregnant or breastfeeding
- Have received a monoclonal antibody or plasma for treatment or prevention of COVID-19
- Have received a vaccine in the last 14 days
- Have symptoms of COVID 19
- Individuals who have had previous COVID-19 infection should wait as they will be eligible to receive vaccine at a later date in the campaign

### **Can pregnant or breastfeeding women receive the vaccine?**

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends that COVID-19 vaccine should not be offered to individuals who are pregnant until after completion of pregnancy and for individuals who are breastfeeding, until further evidence is available.

### **I have a chronic illness. Should I get the vaccine?**

If you are considered immunocompromised, it is not recommended to get the vaccine at this time.

### **Are there any side effects?**

Health Canada has conducted a rigorous scientific review of the available medical evidence to assess the safety of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. No major safety concerns have been identified in the data that we reviewed.

According to Health Canada, the side effects observed during the clinical trials are similar to those reported from other vaccines. The side effects that followed vaccine administration in clinical trials were mild or moderate. They included minor pain at the site of injection, body chills, feeling tired and feeling feverish. These are common side effects of vaccines and do not pose a risk to health. As with all vaccines, there's a risk of serious side effects, such as allergic reactions, but these are rare.

You may have heard stories about people having a reaction or adverse event after getting a vaccine. While sometimes these things can happen after vaccination, it is rarely because of the vaccine. Getting vaccinated is important. Given the serious health consequences of COVID-19, the low likelihood of a serious reaction to a vaccine is outweighed by the benefits to you and your loved ones.

### **What should I do if I experience a side effect?**

While mild-moderate side effects are expected, if you experience any unusual, persistent or serious side effects, these should be reported to workplace health or to your local public health unit. If you have concerns about the symptoms you develop after receiving the vaccine, contact your health care provider for advice.

### **Where can I learn more about the vaccine?**

Please visit the following websites for more information on COVID-19 vaccine and how to protect yourself, your family and your community:

- Immunize BC: <https://immunizebc.ca/covid-19>
- BCCDC COVID-19 vaccine: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine>
- BCCDC COVID-19: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19>
- Government of BC COVID-19 vaccines: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/vaccines>

## **WHERE TO GET VACCINATED**

### **Can I go to my family doctor for a vaccination?**

Not at this time.

### **Where will I be able to get the vaccine?**

We have three clinics in our region. Please attend the one closest to you.

#### **THE BLUSSON SPINAL CORD CENTRE**

818 West 10th Ave., Vancouver

Monday, Dec. 21: 1-7 p.m.

Tuesday, Dec. 22: 9 a.m.-7 p.m.

Wednesday, Dec. 23: 9 a.m.-7 p.m.

Thursday, Dec. 24: 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

[BOOK AN APPOINTMENT HERE](#)

#### **RICHMOND TEST COLLECTION CENTRE (JETSET PARKING LOT)**

5911 North Service Road, Richmond (intersection of Aviation Ave. and North Service Rd.) ([map](#))

Tuesday, Dec. 22: 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

Wednesday, Dec. 23: 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

Thursday, Dec. 24: 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

[BOOK AN APPOINTMENT HERE](#)

#### **NORTH VANCOUVER TEST COLLECTION CENTRE (ICBC CAPILANO CLAIMS CENTRE)**

255 Lloyd Ave., North Vancouver, B.C. ([map](#))

Tuesday, Dec. 22: 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Dec. 23: 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

Thursday, Dec. 24: 9:30-12:30 p.m.

[BOOK AN APPOINTMENT HERE](#)

*\*Please do not publicly post or share the locations and booking links, as these clinics are only for long-term care staff at this time.*

### **When can LTC staff get vaccinated?**

During non-scheduled work time such as end of shift or day off – if staff wish to get the vaccine during work hours, **supervisor approval is required** as we need to ensure services are not impacted while the staff member is receiving the vaccine. You will need to remain at the clinic for approximately 15 minutes after the vaccination.

**Can my spouse, partner or children receive the vaccine at the same time?**

Since this is a phased approach, only those groups identified will be able to receive the vaccination. Please note the COVID-19 vaccines have not yet been tested in people under 16 years old, so children cannot receive the vaccine. Please come alone to the vaccination clinic, to assist with COVID-19 safety protocols.

**Why can't the Pfizer vaccine be delivered to the long-term care facility where I work?**

The first available vaccine is Pfizer-BioNTech, which does not allow for the transport of vaccine due to manufacturer requirements. As such, we can only vaccinate at one location at this time. We are setting up vaccination sites in Richmond and North Shore with plans to expand as more vaccine arrives.

**Are the vaccination sites accessible to people with disabilities?**

VCH immunization clinics will all be accessible to those with mobility challenges.

**What type of COVID-19 protocols are in place at the vaccination locations?**

Your health and safety are important to us and we have COVID-19 infection prevention and control measures and protocols as well as screening at all our clinic spaces. Please do not come to a vaccination clinic if you are feeling unwell or if during the past 14 days:

- You have developed symptoms of COVID-19 such as, cough, fever, chills, muscle pain, shortness of breath, sore throat, nausea and vomiting, headache, fatigue, runny nose, diarrhea or new loss of taste or smell
- You have been identified as a close contact of someone who has COVID-19
- You have been asked by Public Health to self-isolate

**Do I need to wear a mask to the clinic?**

Please wear your own mask to the clinic. Once there, you will be provided with a medical mask and reminded to maintain physical distancing guidelines while at the clinic. After you receive your vaccination, please plan to stay on site for 15 minutes to ensure you experience no adverse effects, such as an allergic reaction.

**Once I get vaccinated, how long do I have to adhere to physical distancing and other measures?**

Provincial orders and guidelines remain in place for everyone, regardless if they have received the vaccine. After immunizations begin, it will still be important to wash your hands, adhere to physical distancing guidelines, wear a mask, and stay home when sick. These layers of protection are still essential as vaccines roll-out.

**Do I have to continue wearing PPE after I'm vaccinated?**

All current enhanced safety measures and COVID-19 protocols will stay in place until a significant percentage of the population has been vaccinated for COVID-19 or until it is deemed safe to relax those

rules. Recipients should continue to practice public health measures for prevention of SARS-COV-2 infection and transmission regardless of vaccination with COVID-19 at this time. While experts learn more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide under real-life conditions, it will be important for everyone to continue using PPE and following the prevention measures in place until further recommendations are available.

**What are the transportation and parking options at the vaccination clinic?**

As well as transit, driving and cycling options, long-term care facilities in the Vancouver Coastal Health region are arranging safe group transportation options to the clinics. Please check with your manager.

**What do I need to bring with me to the vaccination clinic?**

Bring your driver's license (or another government-issued photo ID), Care Card, and Employee ID. Long-term care staff in the priority group will be required to show ID. Dress for the weather and bring an umbrella if the forecast is for rain, as you may be asked to wait outside. Physical distancing measures will be in place throughout, including while waiting in line.

**How long will it take to get vaccinated?**

Vaccination times will vary depending on the number of people attending a clinic. It is recommended that you attend during non-scheduled work time such as end of shift or day off. You will need to remain at the clinic for approximately 15 minutes after the vaccination.

**If I decide not to get vaccinated, what will be expected of me?**

As with other vaccines, COVID-19 vaccination is not mandatory, though it is highly recommended. The use of PPE and prevention measures will be required, regardless of whether an individual has received the vaccine or not.