



MEMORANDUM

To: All Employees of OPTIONS NORTHWEST

From: Anna-Marie Eckensweiler, Executive Director on behalf of Pandemic Team

Date: February 3, 2021 (#4)

Re: Vaccine information sharing.
Please put in the COVID-19 binders.

Good day

On behalf of the Pandemic Team, we wanted to take this opportunity to convey our thanks to all of you who have done an amazing job this past year to keep yourselves and the people we support free from COVID-19. What a huge accomplishment and it wouldn't have been possible without all of the amazing teamwork within the organization.

We are getting a few questions come forward to us on the vaccines and so we have started to put out some information on them. Suzanne Fiorito forwarded a video from our local health unit to share with every employee and we also circulated a survey that was being done province wide. The priority for vaccination has been determined by the government in a phased in approach and developmental services is part of Phase 2. We are engaging locally with the Thunder Bay District Health Unit and our developmental services partner agencies, provincially with OASIS (Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special needs), the Provincial Network and the Great Lakes Society. OPTIONS NORTHWEST is a member of a number of groups to have a voice for advocacy for our sector but also to gain insight.

We are in the process of ensuring our employee lists are up to date and all pertinent medical information on people we support is known. **It is important to contact Human Resources if you have had a change of phone number or address.** We are also reviewing the consent process to ensure that is in place prior to vaccination. We are actively preparing for when we get called for consideration of the vaccine. We just don't know when exactly that will be for our agency.

We have pulled some information from some credible sites to share with you (see below) and some attachments for information. We don't have all of the answers at this time, but we are engaged with the appropriate contacts to ensure we are making the necessary preparations.

One of the items being shared is the Ministry of Health's consent for the vaccination. This document has been revised since its first release, but we wanted to share it so that you become informed as an employee what you need to consider for the vaccine.

As information becomes known, we will share it with you and continue to educate you on information we receive. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to your immediate supervisor/manager or another member of the management/pandemic team.



Anna-Marie Eckensweiler

Information sharing.....

COVID-19 vaccines

Vaccines are safe, effective and the best way to protect you and those around you from serious illnesses like COVID-19.

Vaccines work with your immune system so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. This can reduce your risk of developing COVID-19 and make your symptoms milder if you do get it.

Our supply will not arrive all at once, so distribution will happen in stages. The goal is for everyone in Ontario to be able to get a COVID-19 vaccination if they want one, as soon as enough doses are available from manufacturers.

Getting the vaccine

Ontario has started to roll out its three-phased vaccine distribution implementation plan.

Phase 1

Limited doses of the vaccine available for health care workers in hospitals, long-term care homes and retirement homes, other congregate care settings and remote Indigenous communities.

Starting: December 2020

Phase 2

Increasing stock of vaccines, available to all health care workers, residents in long-term care homes, retirement homes, home care patients with chronic conditions and additional Indigenous communities.

Starting: March 2021

Phase 3

Vaccines available widely across Ontario for anyone who wants to be immunized.

Starting: August 2021

Vaccine safety

Safe and reliable vaccines can help protect you and your family from COVID-19.

They will be an important tool to help stop the spread of the virus and allow individuals, families, and workers to safely resume normal life. The coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine does not cause a coronavirus infection. It helps to build up your immunity to the virus, so your body will fight it off more easily if it affects you.

After independent and thorough scientific reviews for safety, efficacy and quality, Health Canada has approved two vaccines for use in Canada:

- **Pfizer-BioNTech – approved on December 9, 2020.**
- **Moderna – approved on December 23, 2020.**

Both vaccines are manufactured in Belgium. After two doses, they are expected to be 94-95% effective.

Understanding how COVID-19 vaccines are approved, how they work and possible side effects is important.

Overview

The coronavirus (COVID-19 vaccine does not cause a coronavirus infection. It helps to build up your immunity to the virus, so your body will fight it off more easily if it affects you.

This can reduce your risk of developing coronavirus and make your symptoms milder if you do get it.

The effectiveness and immune response of the vaccine is being monitored as the vaccine is rolled out.

Vaccination is expected to be an effective way to prevent the spread and reduce the impact of COVID-19.

Only vaccines that Health Canada determines to be safe and effective will be approved for use in Canada and available in Ontario.

This means the vaccines:

- **were tested on a large number of people through extensive clinical trials.**
- **have met all the requirements for approval, including safety.**
- **will be monitored for any adverse reactions that may occur after vaccination and appropriate measures will be taken.**

Both vaccines require two doses for your body to develop adequate immunity. After two doses, they are expected to be 94-95% effective, which will lower how much of the virus can spread in the population, help build herd immunity and stop the pandemic.

They were both manufactured in Belgium.

Vaccine development

Creating a new vaccine typically takes years. However, the progress on COVID-19 vaccines is happening quickly for many reasons, including:

- **being informed by decades of research on other strains of coronavirus prior to COVID-19, such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Sars-CoV (SARS)**
- **advances in science and technology.**

- international collaboration among scientists, health professionals, researchers, industry, and governments
- increased dedicated funding.

Before any vaccines are available in Ontario, they:

- undergo rigorous clinical trials to ensure they are safe and effective.
- are evaluated and authorized for use by Health Canada, using rigorous standards.

Ontario's plan to make sure vaccines remain safe for Ontarians includes:

- securely and safely transporting and storing vaccines at required conditions and temperatures.
- establishing safe clinic spaces to give people immunizations, including providing the required training to those administering vaccines.
- monitoring for any adverse reactions or side effects that may occur after vaccination and taking appropriate measures, including working with the federal government and other provinces and territories.

Health Canada will continue to monitor all authorized vaccines to ensure they continue to be safe and effective.

Vaccine ingredients and how they work.

COVID-19 vaccines work by training your body's immune system to recognize and fight the virus that causes the disease (SARS-CoV-2). To do this, the vaccine uses certain molecules or parts of the virus — called antigens — which trigger an immune response when they are introduced into the body through vaccination.

By injecting these antigens into the body, your immune system safely learns to:

- recognize the antigens.
- produce antibodies to fight the antigens.
- remember the antigens for the future.

If the virus reappears, your immune system will recognize the antigens and attack them before the disease can develop and cause sickness.

In addition to the antigens, vaccines can also include:

- adjuvants (for example, aluminum salts) – help boost the body’s response to the vaccine.
- antibiotics – prevent contamination during the manufacturing process.
- preservatives and stabilizers – keep the vaccine stable, effective and safe when it’s being made, shipped and stored.

Vaccine types

There are several different types of vaccines being studied to fight COVID-19. Three key types include:

1. mRNA vaccines

mRNA vaccines are a new type of vaccine.

mRNA vaccines teach our cells how to make a protein from the virus that will trigger an immune response and create antibodies. These antibodies help us fight the infection if the real virus does enter our body in the future as they recognize this protein.

The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines that Health Canada approved for use are both mRNA type vaccines.

2. Viral vector-based vaccines

These vaccines use genetically modified viruses (vectors) that are harmless to humans.

Once injected into the body, the viral vector contained in the vaccine produces a part of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, such as its spike protein (the part of the virus that binds to our cells and starts the COVID-

19 infection). The vector virus is not the virus that causes COVID-19 and doesn't make you sick. It does its job and then goes away.

This process triggers an immune response against the spike protein without exposing you to the virus that causes COVID-19.

Viral vector-based vaccines have been used to develop:

- many vaccines for animals
- an Ebola vaccine approved by a number of international regulators

3. Virus-like particle vaccines

Virus-like particles are molecules that mimic viruses but are not infectious.

They are very similar to real viral molecules, so introducing them into the body through vaccination triggers an immune response, without any symptoms of the virus they are being vaccinated against.

Once the body responds to the virus-like particles, it recognizes the virus and prevents infection in the future, giving people immunity to that particular virus.

Virus-like particles have been an effective way of vaccinating against diseases such as:

- human papillomavirus (HPV)
- hepatitis B
- malaria

Possible side effects

Serious adverse reactions to vaccines are extremely rare. They happen less than one time in a million.

Once a vaccine is in use, Canada has a strong vaccine safety monitoring system to alert public health authorities of changing trends or unusual adverse events that were not previously reported.

The side effects observed during the clinical trials for the approved vaccines are very similar to other vaccines. They were all mild or moderate and included things like pain at the site of injection, body chills, feeling tired and feeling feverish.

The vaccines cannot cause COVID-19. This is because they do not contain the SARS-CoV-2 virus responsible for the disease. However, if you come in contact with the virus just before or after you complete the vaccine series of two doses, you could still develop COVID-19.

To date, no serious adverse effects have been identified with the vaccines approved for use.

Approving vaccines in Canada

Drugs, including vaccines, are regulated under the [Food and Drugs Act and regulations](#). They must meet the regulatory requirements for safety, efficacy and quality before they can be approved for use and distribution in Canada. The federal government (Health Canada) is responsible for approving vaccines.

Before authorizing a vaccine, Health Canada assesses the:

- scientific and clinical evidence — including results of clinical trials — to determine if a vaccine product is safe, effective, and manufactured to the highest quality.
- safety and efficacy of the vaccine to determine that there are no concerns, the vaccine can trigger an adequate immune response to protect against disease and the benefits outweigh the risks.
- manufacturing process to make sure the manufacturer can carry out the necessary quality controls for the vaccine.

If there is not enough evidence to support the manufacturer's safety, effectiveness, or quality claims:

- Health Canada will not authorize the vaccine.
- the product cannot be sold in Canada.