



COVID-19 Vaccine roll-out Information

General Information

COVID-19 vaccine update

The first supply of a COVID-19 vaccine has arrived in BC.

Please note that the COVID-19 vaccine is **not available** for everyone at this time. Vaccines will be distributed in phases over the coming months.

The first phase of 4,000 doses will be given to frontline health providers working in long-term care, assisted living, ICUs, ERs and COVID medical wards. Healthy providers will ensure the safety of the patients they care for.

Other priority groups will receive the vaccine in the coming weeks and months. It is currently anticipated that everyone will have the opportunity to be vaccinated in 2021.

We will let you know when and where you can get the vaccine as it becomes available.

Thank you for your patience, and please continue to do all you can to prevent spread of the virus, and to keep you and your loved ones safe.

This means wearing a mask when you're out, limiting your contacts to those living in your household – especially over the holidays – and washing your hands frequently.

You can find more information on the vaccine [here](#).

FAQ - Your questions answered about the COVID-19 vaccine in BC

With the announcement of the arrival of the first supply of the COVID-19 vaccine in BC, many of you will have questions about the vaccine – who gets it and when; is it safe; is it effective and more.

We hope that the following information answers some of those questions, as we all wait for further news about how the vaccine will roll out across our province.

Who is getting the vaccine first?

- Vaccinations will first go to protect those most at risk – health care workers protecting those in long-term care and assisted living, and those working in ICUs, ERs and COVID

medical wards. Ensuring their safety first protects our most vulnerable patients.

- After that, elderly residents in long-term care homes and assisted living will receive the vaccine as soon as possible.
- Seniors over 80 and other priority groups will receive the vaccine in the coming weeks.
- Please be patient and understanding as priority groups are vaccinated first.

I'm not from a high-risk group. When can I get vaccinated?

- Based on the projections of the Provincial Health officer, it is anticipated that the general population will start to get the vaccine mid-2021, and it may take towards the end of the year for everyone to be vaccinated.

Why will it take so long for everyone to get vaccinated?

- Vaccination delivery is a complex undertaking, and we need to take the time to do it well. In the meantime, we ask that British Columbians remain patient, and continue to take measures to reduce the spread of the virus as they wait their turn for the vaccine.

Who should NOT get the vaccine?

- People under 16 years old, and pregnant and immunocompromised people are not recommended to get the vaccine at this time.
- People who have had a severe allergic reaction to any vaccine or are allergic to any [ingredients in the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine](#) should also not receive the vaccine at this time. Further guidance for these groups will be available soon.

Is the vaccine safe?

- The vaccines are safe – our regulators set the bar high to ensure the most rigorous standards are met.
- Vaccine trials also included older people with weakened immune systems, and those from different ethnic backgrounds.
- It should be recognized that risks of the virus are significant, and far outweigh the risks of vaccination.

How successful are the vaccines in protecting people from the virus?

- Success of the vaccines is 94 to 95%, which means they can protect most people. This is really good news. At best, we had been hoping for 50 to 60% effectiveness.

How many doses will I need and when will it start to work?

- People will need two doses – 21 days apart.
- Early research shows that the vaccine starts to become effective after about 14 days from the first shot, but it is critical to get both shots to ensure you are completely safe.
- During this time, it will be important to continue to wear a mask when you're out, to limit your contacts to those living in your household – especially over the holidays – and to wash your hands frequently.

How long will I be protected for?

- As time goes on, we will be learning more about the virus and our immune responses i.e., how long it takes for immunity to be achieved, whether we can still transmit COVID-19, and how long we are protected from getting the virus.

Where can I get the vaccine?

- Those details will become available. Planning is underway to determine how best to safely provide the vaccine in our community