

## Ministry of Health – Ministry of Long-Term Care

December 12, 2020

Dear Long-term Care Home Staff,

Representing a turning point in our fight against COVID-19, Health Canada has authorized the Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA vaccine. This vaccine has been shown to help to protect those who are immunized from becoming sick with COVID-19. No serious side effects associated with this vaccine have been reported to date.

There is a limited supply of the Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA vaccine available in the initial phase of the vaccine program. As recommended by the COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force, and in alignment with the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, certain high-risk groups are recommended to receive COVID-19 vaccine first.

We are very excited to share that long-term care home staff, essential caregivers, support workers and other employees at long-term care homes are among this first group eligible for immunization.

We encourage you to get first in line to receive this vaccine and have included in this package additional information on the Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA vaccine and what to expect when receiving the vaccine. The benefits of vaccination greatly outweigh the risks, and many more illnesses and deaths would occur without vaccines. Vaccines prevent illness and disease and save lives. While the vaccine is voluntary, doing your part by getting vaccinated will protect people's lives and help Canada recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. You cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine.

In order for your body to build up protection against the virus, you will need to receive two doses of this vaccine, 21 days apart. We will work to ensure that the administration of the COVID-19 is done safely, appropriately and in a timely manner.

We are very pleased to share this exciting news with you and look forward to this new chapter in our fight against COVID-19!

Ministry of Health

# COVID-19 What you need to know before your COVID-19 vaccine appointment

Version 1 - December 12, 2020 (amended December 13, 2020)

This guidance provides basic information only. It is not intended to take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, legal advice or legal requirements.

In the event of any conflict between this guidance document and any applicable emergency orders, or directives issued by the Minister of Health, Minister of Long-Term Care, or the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH), the order or directive prevails.

- Please check the Ministry of Health (MOH) [COVID-19 website](#) regularly for updates to this document, list of symptoms, other guidance documents, Directives and other information.

**You have been identified to be eligible to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. Please read below to know what to expect for upcoming appointment to receive your vaccine.**

## What do I need to bring to my appointment?

- Your health (OHIP) card.
  - If you do not have an OHIP card, bring another form of a government issued-photo ID such as a driver's license, passport, Status Card or other provincial health cards.
- Immunization record to keep track of this and other vaccines
- Reading glasses and/or hearing aid if required
- Your mask
- A support person if required (e.g. interpreter)

**What do I need to do to prepare for my appointment?**

- Take your regular medication and eat your meals as usual.
- Do not wear any scented products.
- Wear a loose-fitting top or a t-shirt so that the health care provider can easily access your arm for the vaccination
- **If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should not attend the clinic. Call the clinic and follow their instructions.**
- Do not arrive more than 10 minutes before your appointment.

**What can I expect when I arrive to my appointment?**

Vaccination clinics will take every precaution to ensure your health and safety during your visit. Public health measures will be implemented, and all health care providers, patients, and other staff and visitors will be expected to follow all public health measures in the clinic. Be sure to read and follow any signs or instructions provided at the clinic.

You will be asked to provide your OHIP or Status card (or any government issued-photo ID if no OHIP card) to confirm your appointment.

You will be asked to complete active screening to see if you have signs or symptoms associated with COVID-19 prior to entry into the clinic.

You will be asked to wear a mask while at the clinic, as well as to clean your hands, and practice physical distancing from others (at least 2 metres).

You will be asked to stay for 15 minutes after you receive the vaccine to monitor for any adverse events following immunization.

# What you need to know about the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine

## What is this vaccine?

- The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is the first Health Canada approved vaccine to protect individuals against the COVID-19 virus. The vaccine was authorized for use in Canada on December 9, 2020.

## Who can get the vaccine?

The vaccine has been authorized for use in individuals age 16 and older.

The vaccine **should not** be administered to:

- Individuals allergic to any of the [ingredients in this vaccine \(found in the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine monograph\)](#), including polyethylene glycol.
- Anyone who has symptoms that could be due to COVID-19; these patients should get a COVID-19 test.

The vaccine **may not** be recommended:

- In situations of suspected hypersensitivity or non-anaphylactic allergy to COVID-19 vaccine components, investigation is indicated which may lead to immunization in a controlled setting. Consultation with an allergist is advised
- For individuals with previous allergic reaction or breathing problems from the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. For individuals who have experienced a serious allergic reaction, including anaphylaxis, to another vaccine, drug or food, should talk to their health professional before receiving the vaccine.

The medical needs of these patients, including whether or not the administration of a vaccine is appropriate for a patient, are best determined between the patient and their healthcare provider.

The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is not currently being offered to the following groups who were excluded from the clinical trials until further evidence is available. More data may be available in the near future.

- **Women who are or could be pregnant.**
- **Breastfeeding women.** It is unknown whether the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is excreted in human milk. A risk to the newborn or infant cannot be excluded.
- **Children.** Clinical trials to determine safety and effectiveness of the vaccine in children are forthcoming.
- Immunosuppressed patients due to disease or treatment or suffering from an autoimmune disorder

Precautions should be taken for:

Patients who have a bleeding problem, bruise easily or use a blood-thinning medicine

### **How many doses of the vaccine do I need?**

All individuals need 2 doses of the vaccine, 21 days apart.

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

The vaccine will be administered through an intramuscular injection into the upper arm (into the deltoid muscle).

### **Are there any side effects associated with the vaccine?**

Like all medicines and other vaccines, the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine can cause side effects. Those observed during the clinical trials were commonly reported side effects of vaccines and do not pose a risk to health.

- The most frequent adverse reactions were usually mild or moderate in intensity and resolved within a few days after vaccination.
- No major safety concerns were reported in the data submitted to Health Canada.

You should monitor for potential side effects (see below) after receiving the vaccine.

- Pain at injection site, redness, swelling

- Fatigue
- Headache
- Muscle pain or joint pain
- Chills
- Fever
- Swollen glands

You will receive a note from the clinic at the time of your vaccination called the After Care Sheet that tells you what to expect after vaccination.