

COVID-19 Vaccine: Update #2

Attention: Physicians, Emergency Departments, Infection Control Practitioners, Occupational Health Practitioners, Walk-In Clinics/Urgent Care Clinics, Nurse Practitioners, EMS, Designated Officers, Midwives, Family Health Teams, Pharmacies, Central LHIN, NSM LHIN, Beausoleil First Nation, Moose Deer Point First Nation, Rama First Nation, Wahta First Nation, Long-term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, Hospices

Date: January 4, 2021

Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre (RVH) and the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) launched the first COVID-19 Immunization Clinic in our area on December 22nd at 29 Sperling Drive in Barrie (the old Barrie Police Station) which is a shared site with the RVH COVID-19 Assessment Centre. RVH was selected as one of the initial hospital sites to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine in Ontario, as it has the capacity to store the vaccine at the required -60°C to -80°C. At this time the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine cannot be transported, so vaccine administration must be completed at the 29 Sperling Drive, Barrie clinic location. We hope that as updated information on the vaccine's stability becomes available, we will eventually be able to move the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine so it can be administered in other locations.

Who Can Be Immunized at the COVID-19 Immunization Clinic Currently?

- Long-term care home staff
- Retirement home staff
- Designated essential caregivers of each LTCH/Rhome resident (up to 2 caregivers per resident)
- Starting January 4th hospitals will be able to book appointments for 10% of their highest risk staff

To ensure maximum utilization of all available appointment times, a vacancy management strategy was created on December 31st where hospital staff from all area hospitals who are able to get to the 29 Sperling Drive, Barrie clinic on short notice are invited to submit their names to be included on a waitlist. This has allowed us to utilize appointment times not booked or cancelled and ensure none of the vaccine is wasted.

COVID-19 vaccine supply remains limited and immunization must be rolled-out in phases over the next few weeks. Appointment bookings for these groups are all being facilitated by the facility administrators to ensure that appointments are restricted to those in these groups. We have been working with each facility to book the appointments for their staff accordingly to ensure equitable distribution of the vaccine. When people receive their first dose of vaccine, they are booked by the clinic staff for their return appointment to receive their second dose 21 days later.

As more vaccine becomes available, and we are able to offer the vaccine to additional groups we will provide updated information on who, when, and how to access the vaccine. For more information on the province's three-phased vaccine distribution implementation plan, please visit [COVID-19 vaccines for Ontario](#).ⁱ



Staff of Facilities Currently in Outbreak

We are immunizing staff who are working in facilities that are in outbreak, provided they pass COVID-19 symptom screening and have not been identified as a high-risk contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19 by public health (i.e. have not directed to self-isolate or put on work self-isolation if deemed critical staff).

Clarification on Groups That Have Been Recommended to Hold on Immunization at This Time

As per provincial direction, people in the following groups are not recommended to be vaccinated at this time as a precautionary measure until more information on the vaccine use in these groups is available:

- Pregnant women
- Breastfeeding women
- Those with auto-immune disorders
- Those who are immunosuppressed
- Those with severe allergies to allergens or products, other than a component of the vaccine, for which they have been prescribed an Epi-Pen

While the province recommends that people in these groups wait until more information is available on the use of the vaccine in these groups to be vaccinated, if someone attests that they have consulted with their health care provider and the health care provider has determined the person should be immunized, the directive that nurses are operating under at the COVID-19 Immunization Clinic in Barrie will permit them to administer the vaccine with the client's informed consent.

To assist health care providers in their assessment with patients in these groups, refer to the [NACI Statement Recommendations on the use of COVID-19 vaccinesⁱⁱ](#) and the [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine: Health Canada recommendations for people with serious allergiesⁱⁱⁱ](#).

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada (SOGC) has issued a [statement on COVID-19 immunization of pregnant and lactating women^{iv}](#). The SOGC consensus statement is “For individuals who are at high-risk of infection and/or morbidity from COVID-19, it is the SOGC’s position that the documented risk of not getting the COVID-19 vaccine outweighs the theorized and undescribed risk of being vaccinated during pregnancy or while breastfeeding and vaccination should be offered.”

The Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (CSACI) has issued a [statement on severe allergies and COVID-19 vaccines^v](#). It includes the following statement:

“The CSACI would like to reassure our fellow Canadians that unless one has a pre-existing allergy to a component of a vaccine, including the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, it is safe to proceed with vaccination for COVID-19. In addition, those with other allergic problems are no more likely to experience an allergic reaction to the COVID-19 vaccine than the general population and should safely be able to receive this vaccine—this includes those with a history of serious allergic reactions or anaphylaxis to substances that are not an ingredient in this vaccine, and those with food allergy, eczema, allergic rhinitis (hay fever), asthma, or stinging insect allergy.”

The Ontario Rheumatology Association has some good information and resources on COVID-19 immunization for patients with rheumatological conditions at their [website^{vi}](#). The Canadian Rheumatology Association (CRA) has issued a [statement on COVID-19 vaccination^{vii}](#). It includes the following statements:

“1. Patients above 70 years old are considered high-risk for severe illness with COVID-19 and therefore vaccination should be considered regardless of underlying diagnosis or treatment.

2. In those below 70 years of age, vaccination should be assessed on an individual basis, taking into consideration all potential risk factors including occupation. To date, patients on disease modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs), (synthetic, biologic or small molecules) do not appear to be at higher risk for more severe illness with COVID-19.

3. In patients at higher risk for more severe illness with COVID-19, including those on corticosteroids, vaccination should be considered.

4. NACI has also stated that the COVID-19 vaccine may be offered to these individuals if a risk assessment deems that the benefits outweigh the potential risks, and if informed consent includes discussion about the absence of evidence of the use of this vaccine in these populations and the potential for lower vaccine response in those immunosuppressed.”

The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine cannot be administered to those under 16 years of age at the clinic, as this is off label use at this time.

In addition, the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is contraindicated and will not be provided to those with an allergy to any component of the vaccine (refer to the table below) or an anaphylactic or other allergic reaction to a previous dose of this vaccine.

Components of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine

Vaccine	Vaccine Components	Contains Latex (Yes or No)
Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nucleoside-modified messenger RNA (modRNA) encoding the viral spike glycoprotein (S) of SARS-CoV-2ALC-0315 • ALC-0315 (4-hydroxybutyl) azanediyl)bis(hexane-6,1-diyl)bis (2-hexyldecanoate) • ALC-0159 = 2-[(polyethylene glycol)-2000]-N,N-ditetradecylacetamide • 1,2-distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine • cholesterol • dibasic sodium phosphate dehydrate • monobasic potassium phosphate • potassium chloride • sodium chloride • sucrose • water for injection 	No

Timing of COVID-19 Vaccines with Other Vaccines

As per the current NACI recommendations, COVID-19 vaccine should not be given simultaneously with other live or inactivated vaccines at this time, unless other vaccines are required for post-exposure prophylaxis. In the absence of evidence it would be prudent to wait for a period of at least 28 days after the administration of the complete 2-dose series before receiving any other vaccine. And for those who have received a vaccine recently, it would be prudent to wait at least 14 days to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

Moderna Vaccine Update

We are expecting our first shipment of Moderna vaccine (which can be moved and is stable in fridge for up to 30 days) the week of January 11th. The distribution of this vaccine will be led by public health, and it is to be allocated to LTCH residents. This initial shipment of vaccine will cover the majority of the LTCH residents in Simcoe and Muskoka. Remaining LTCH residents, retirement home residents and those patients living in the three acute care LTC wards in our area will then be immunized with our second shipment of Moderna vaccine (which is anticipated sometime in February).

We have been working with LTCHs to plan for the arrival of the Moderna vaccine, and will continue to support them to ensure they have what they need to immunize their residents when vaccine arrives.

There are a number of COVID-19 resources and documents available through our Health Professional Portal at www.smdhu.org/hpportal as well as through [Public Health Ontario](#)^{viii} and the [Government of Ontario](#).^{ix}

Attached below is a new resource that we have developed "[What you need to know before your appointment to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine](#)" which can be shared with those coming to the COVID-19 Immunization Clinic at 29 Sperling Drive in Barrie to be immunized.

What you need to know before your appointment to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine

Date: January 4, 2021

The current priority is to provide the COVID-19 vaccine to long-term care home and retirement home staff, and essential caregivers of residents. To maximize appointment bookings, high risk hospital staff can also be vaccinated at this time. Residents of long-term care homes and retirement homes will soon be receiving the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine.

You need two doses of the vaccine that will be given at least 21 days apart, for the best protection. See instructions below on how to prepare for your vaccination.

What you need to do:

1. To ensure that appointment bookings are restricted to those above, we are working with each facility to book appointments for those in these priority groups. You will receive an email confirmation of your appointment time via the email address you provide your facility with. Be sure to check your junk mail if you don't receive in your inbox.
2. Screen yourself for symptoms of COVID-19. If you have symptoms on the day of your appointment, stay home and cancel your appointment by clicking on the link in the confirmation email or notifying your administrator.
3. Bring your health card (OHIP). If you don't have one, bring another piece of government identification.
4. Bring your own mask, glasses or other assistive devices.
5. Wear a loose sleeve or short sleeve shirt for easy access to your upper arm.
6. Arrive at your appointment time only and not early. Due to COVID public health measures we have limited waiting room space available. Dress for the weather as you may be required to wait outdoors for a few minutes before entering the clinic.
7. Do not wear scented products (e.g. perfume) as some people are allergic.
8. You must stay at the clinic for 15 minutes after you have been vaccinated so you can be monitored for any side effects or allergic reactions. The entire process may take 30 minutes or longer.

Do not get this Pfizer vaccine if you:

- have allergies to any vaccine ingredients, including polyethylene glycol (PEG);
- have had a severe reaction to this vaccine; or
- have received another vaccine in the last 14 days.

Consult with your health care provider before booking an appointment if you:

- are pregnant, want to become pregnant soon after vaccination, or are breastfeeding;
- have an autoimmune disorder;
- have a weakened immune system due to illness or treatment; or
- have severe allergies to things other than a component of the vaccine, for which you have been prescribed an Epi-Pen.

People in these groups are not recommended to be vaccinated at this time as a precautionary measure until more information on the vaccine use in these groups is available. Your health care provider will review the benefits and risks for your unique situation. The vaccine can be provided to you at our clinic provided that you have consulted with your health care provider prior to coming for your appointment, and it has been recommended that you receive the vaccine.

We are currently not providing the vaccine to anyone under 16 years of age.

Frequently Asked Questions

If I don't have a health card, am I still eligible for the free vaccine?

Yes. If you don't have a health card, bring a government issued photo ID such as a driver's license, passport, Status Card, etc.

What are the vaccine ingredients that I may be allergic to?

- mRNA (medicinal ingredient)
- ALC-0315 = (4-hydroxybutyl)azanediylbis(hexane-6,1-diyl)bis(2-hexyldecanoate)
- ALC-0159 = 2-[(**polyethylene glycol**)-2000]-N,N-ditetradecylacetamide
- 1,2-distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine
- dibasic sodium phosphate dehydrate
- monobasic potassium phosphate

What is polyethylene glycol (PEG)? How do I know if I have a PEG allergy?

This compound is commonly used in laxatives, makeup, skin care products, personal lubricants and toothpastes. It is also in cough syrup, and in some food and drinks. If you are unsure of the ingredients you are allergic to, talk to a health care provider.

Can I still get the vaccine if I have existing health conditions (such as diabetes, high blood pressure, hepatitis, HIV)?

Yes. People with stable health conditions, including HIV, may be vaccinated with the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine as long they are not on medications that weaken the immune system. This also includes people with stable hepatitis B or C.

Can I still get the vaccine if I'm trying to get pregnant?

There is limited information on the use of this Pfizer vaccine in pregnant people. If you are pregnant, breastfeeding, or planning to have a baby, talk to your health care provider first. As a precaution, avoid trying to get pregnant for one to two months after finishing this two-dose vaccine.

If I have had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need the vaccine?

Yes. There is some evidence to suggest that natural immunity from a COVID-19 illness may not last very long. It is best to get the vaccine to stay protected.

Do I still need to wear and mask and avoid close contact with others if I have received this two-dose vaccine?

Yes. It is still important for everyone to continue with public health measures like wearing a mask, physical distancing and washing hands often until we can be sure that the vaccine prevents the spread of most COVID-19 infections.

Do I still need to complete surveillance testing for COVID-19 if required at my workplace after I have been vaccinated?

Yes. At this time, there is not enough evidence to know whether this vaccine prevents people who develop asymptomatic COVID-19 infection from passing it on to others so continued surveillance testing is recommended at this time.

Can I have COVID-19 vaccine if I just recently received my flu shot or another vaccine?

According to the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) COVID-19 vaccine should not be given simultaneously with other vaccines at this time, unless the other vaccine is required for post-exposure prophylaxis (i.e. Rabies). Until more information is known about any interactions between mRNA vaccines and inactivated or live vaccines, people should wait at least 28 days after the administration of their complete series of COVID-19 vaccine before receiving any other vaccine. And for those who have received a vaccine recently, they should wait at least 14 days to receive COVID-19 vaccine.

My facility is currently in COVID-19 outbreak. Can I still receive the vaccine?

We are immunizing staff who are working in facilities that are in outbreak, provided they pass COVID-19 symptom screening and have not been identified as a high risk contact of a confirmed

case of COVID-19 by public health (i.e. have not directed to self-isolate or put on work self-isolation if deemed critical staff).

For more information about COVID-19 vaccine, please visit the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit's website at www.simcoemuskokahealth.org or call Health Connection at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520.

ⁱ <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccines-ontario>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/national-advisory-committee-on-immunization-naci/recommendations-use-covid-19-vaccines.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://healthycanadians.gc.ca/recall-alert-rappel-avis/hc-sc/2020/74543a-eng.php>

^{iv} https://www.sogc.org/common/Uploaded%20files/Latest%20News/SOCCG_Statement_COVID-19_Vaccination_in_Pregnancy.pdf

^v <https://csaci.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/PressRelease-Pfizer-COVID-19vaccine-DEC-14.pdf>

^{vi} <https://ontariorheum.ca/covid-19-vaccine-recommended-resources>

^{vii} <https://rheum.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CRA-Position-Statement-on-COVID-19-Vaccination-v2-FINAL.pdf>

^{viii} <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/>

^{ix} http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/2019_guidance.aspx.