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COVID-19 Vaccine: Update #42

Provincial Launch of Booster Doses for HCWs, Indigenous People, Those Who Are 70+ and Those Who Received Viral Vector COVID-19 Vaccines

Attention: Physicians, Emergency Departments, Hospital CEOs, Hospital Laboratories, Infection Control Practitioners, Occupational Health Practitioners, Walk-In Clinics/Urgent Care Clinics, Nurse and 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, Coroners, Funeral Directors, Dentists, Group Homes, Homes for Special Care, Optometrists, Corrections, Municipalities, Licensed Child Care Providers

Date: November 3, 2021

Ontario is expanding booster dose eligibility, based on last week's National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommendations, to the following populations when at least six months have passed since their last dose:

- Individuals aged 70 and over (born in 1951 or earlier)
- Health care workers and designated essential caregivers in congregate settings who are 16+
- Indigenous people and their non-Indigenous household members who are 16+
- Individuals who received a complete series of viral vector vaccine (two doses of Astra-Zeneca/COVISHIELD or one dose of Janssen vaccine)

As outlined in the updated provincial [COVID-19 Vaccine Third Dose Recommendations](#), booster doses are being offered to these groups based on evidence of gradual waning immunity six months after receiving their second dose and a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. To date, a primary series of the COVID-19 vaccines have been shown to maintain high vaccine effectiveness with no evidence of waning against serious illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19 in most populations. However, evidence is emerging that vaccine effectiveness against asymptomatic infection and mild COVID-19 disease may decrease with time, and that currently authorized COVID-19 vaccines may be less effective against the Delta variant which could contribute to increased transmission of infection.

Therefore, for certain populations, an additional dose may be needed to obtain more durable protection. NACI's booster recommendations placed particular emphasis on adults over 80, who are at highest risk of severe illness and waning protection. At this time in Ontario, booster doses are not recommended for those under 16 years of age due to insufficient evidence regarding booster doses.

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Evidence from clinical trials suggests that booster doses of mRNA vaccines given six months after the primary series elicited a robust immune response. Real world data suggests that a booster dose provides good short-term effectiveness and a safety profile similar to the second dose of the vaccine. There is no evidence on the long-term effectiveness of booster doses so it remains unknown at this time how long this benefit might last. See [NACI interim guidance](#) for more information on the evidence, safety and immunogenicity of COVID-19 booster doses

While COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective, the province is prepared to expand eligibility for a booster dose to all Ontarians over time. Based on Ontario’s COVID-19 vaccination rollout for first and second doses, expansion of eligibility for booster doses will be based on age and risk, with an interval of six to eight months from the second dose.

Booster doses are to be provided to eligible groups at an interval of **at least 6-months (168 days)** following their second doses.

Those who received second dose in...	Booster dose can be given starting 6 months later in...
May and earlier	November
June	December
July	January
August	February
September	March

i.e. someone who received their second dose on May 15th, is eligible to receive their booster dose on or after November 15th.

According to NACI, it is safe and effective to give COVID-19 vaccine concomitantly with other vaccines. Therefore, booster doses can be co-administered with influenza vaccine, using a separate needle and site.

While booster eligibility is proceeding, the priority of Ontario’s COVID-19 vaccination program continues to be on those who have not yet received first and second doses, including children 5- to 11-years once a vaccine is approved for this group.

For booster doses, the Ministry of Health and NACI are recommending the following:

- Either Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines may be used as a third or booster dose (regardless of which COVID-19 vaccine was used in the primary series).
- Residents of long-term care homes, retirement homes or seniors in other congregate living settings, adults 70 years of age and older, and all eligible immunocompromised individuals are recommended to receive a full dose (100 mcg, 0.5 mL) if Moderna vaccine is being offered for a third or booster dose.
- For all other individuals less than 70 years of age, if offering Moderna as a booster dose, a half dose (50 mcg, 0.25 mL) is recommended.
- If offering Pfizer-BioNTech for a third or booster dose, the full dose (30 mcg) is recommended.

- Individuals that received AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD COVID-19 vaccine for their first and second dose are recommended to receive an mRNA vaccine for their third or booster dose unless contraindicated.

Reopening of Health Unit Community Based COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics

The health unit will be re-opening community based COVID-19 vaccine clinics November 15, 2021. These clinics will be by appointment for those eligible for booster doses, and people will be able to book an appointment using the Provincial Vaccine Appointment Booking system (PVAB) starting around November 10, 2021. Walk ins will be accepted at these clinics for dose one and two. These clinics will be available for those eligible for booster doses until vaccine is approved for 5- to 11-year-olds. During the initial roll out of immunization to 5- to 11-year-olds community clinics will be focused on first doses for this group and those eligible for booster doses will be encouraged to access the vaccine through their employer for HCWs, through their primary care provider, pharmacy, the GOVAXX bus, or the COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic at 29 Sperling Drive in Barrie.

The 29 Sperling Drive Barrie COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic is open Sunday to Thursday from 10am to 6pm. Appointments will be required for third doses but walk ins for first and second doses will be accepted. Third dose appointments will be available via the PVAB as of Saturday November 6, 2021 for appointments starting Sunday November 7, 2021.

Individuals Aged 70 and Over

The eligibility for those 70 years of age and older is based on their year of birth (those born in 1951), not their actual date of birth. The majority of those 70+ will not be eligible for their booster dose until December based on the 6-month interval required between second and third doses. Those eligible now will be able to access the vaccine through some primary care providers, pharmacies, the GOVAXX bus, or the 29 Sperling Drive Barrie COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic. Those 70+ will also be able to access an appointment for one of the health unit community-based clinics depending on timing of 5- to 11-year-old roll out as outlined above.

Health Care Workers and Designated Essential Caregivers in Congregate Settings

Health care workers include any regulated health professional and any staff member, contract worker, student/trainee, registered volunteer, other essential caregiver, including those that are not providing direct patient care and are frequently in the patient environment (i.e. cleaning staff, research staff, other administrative staff). Staff who are providing healthcare service or direct patient service in a congregate, residential or community setting outside of a health care organization are also included. Health care workers may be able to access vaccination through their employer, otherwise they will be required to show proof of eligibility at community clinics and pharmacies.

Indigenous Populations

All Indigenous (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) people 16+ and their household members living on and off reserve are eligible for a booster dose at least 6 months (168 days) following their second dose. First Nations, Inuit and Métis populations have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 in Canada and have experienced higher rates of COVID-19 infection due to a number of intersecting inequities and factors

related to the social determinants of health. Immunization of individuals in this population has the potential to reduce or prevent the exacerbation of intersecting health and social inequities. This population was also eligible for the shortened product monograph interval and evidence to date suggests that, compared to longer intervals, shorter intervals between first and second doses result in lower immune responses and therefore may also result in more rapid waning of protection, including against variants of concern.

The health unit is working with Indigenous community partners to support immunization of those living in First Nations communities and to offer dedicated clinics for urban Indigenous peoples and their household members in Orillia, Midland and Barrie in the coming weeks. Details will be provided through these partner organizations and on SMDHU's website soon.

Indigenous peoples can also access their booster dose from their employer for HCWs, some primary care providers, pharmacies, the GOVAXX bus, the 29 Sperling Drive Barrie COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic or one of the health unit community-based clinics depending on timing of 5- to 11-year-old roll out as outlined above. Eligibility will be indicated by self-attestation (no documentation required).

Individuals Who Received Viral Vector COVID-19 Vaccines

Individuals that received two doses of AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD COVID-19 vaccine or Janssen COVID-19 vaccine are recommended to receive a booster dose of mRNA vaccine unless contraindicated.

Additional COVID-19 Vaccine Information

For more information about the rollout of COVID-19 vaccine in our area, please refer to the SMDHU [COVID-19 Vaccine and Immunization](#) webpages.

For more information on the province's three-phased vaccine distribution implementation plan, please [visit COVID-19 vaccines for Ontario](#).

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](#) and the [Government of Ontario](#).