

Dr. Charles Gardner, Medical Officer of Health  
Dr. Colin Lee, Associate Medical Officer of Health  
Dr. Lisa Simon, Associate Medical Officer of Health

## COVID-19 Vaccine: Update #43

### Recommended 8-week Interval Between Initial Two Doses, Importance of Third Doses for Severely and Moderately Immunocompromised, Clarification on Booster Eligibility and Moderna Dosing and Community Clinic Update

**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 18, 2021

---

#### Update on Lower Coverage Groups for Dose One and Two

Locally, we have made progress together as part of our last mile work in the following lower coverage groups (coverage as of October 21, 2021 with change in brackets from October 3, 2021):

- Recent experience of homelessness – first dose 62% (+4%) second dose 47% (+5%)
- Recent refugees – first dose 80% (+2%) second dose 77% (+7%)
- Other recent newcomers – first dose 77% (+2%) second dose 73% (+3%)
- Currently pregnant – first dose 67% (+4%) second dose 61% (+7%)
- Substance use disorder – 67% have received a first dose (+4%)
- Severe mental illness – 78% have received a first dose (+3%)

Thank you for your continued support encouraging and providing vaccination in these groups.

#### Recommended 8-week Interval Between Dose One and Two

The [Ministry of Health COVID-19 Vaccine Administration](#) guidance document was recently updated and the province has officially adopted the [NACI recommendation](#) to encourage an 8-week interval between first and second doses. An interval of 8 weeks is being recommended as there is emerging evidence that longer intervals between the first and second doses of COVID-19 vaccines result in a more robust and durable immune response and higher vaccine effectiveness. People can still choose to receive their first and second doses at the Health Canada approved interval of 21 days for Pfizer-BioNTech or 28 days for Moderna with informed consent.



### Third Doses for Those Who are Severely or Moderately Immunocompromised, and Booster Doses

Third dose uptake by those who are severely or moderately immunocompromised continues to be very low despite these groups having now been eligible for third doses since August. This group is particularly high risk due to the likelihood that they could have had a sub-optimal immune response to the initial two doses due to their underlying condition. As such, their third dose is intended to complete their primary series, rather than act as a booster, and it is **strongly recommended** that they receive this third dose. If you have not already done so, please consider reaching out to your eligible patients to ensure they are aware.

The following table outlines who is currently eligible for third / booster doses in Ontario:

Eligible Group	Interval
<b>Third Dose to Extend a Primary Series</b> (for those who likely had a sub-optimal immune response due to their condition or treatment to initial two dose series)	
<p>The following Severely or Moderately Immunocompromised groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals receiving active treatment (e.g., chemotherapy, targeted therapies, immunotherapy) for solid tumour or hematologic malignancies</li> <li>• Recipients of solid-organ transplant and taking immunosuppressive therapy</li> <li>• Recipients of chimeric antigen receptor (CAR)-T-cell therapy or hematopoietic stem cell transplant (within 2 years of transplantation or taking immunosuppression therapy)</li> <li>• Individuals with moderate to severe primary immunodeficiency (e.g., DiGeorge syndrome, Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome)</li> <li>• Those with stage 3 or advanced untreated HIV infection and those with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome</li> <li>• Those undergoing active treatment with the following categories of immunosuppressive therapies: anti-B cell therapies (monoclonal antibodies targeting CD19, CD20 and CD22), high-dose systemic corticosteroids (defined as prednisone equivalent of <math>\geq 2</math> mg/kg/day or 20 mg/day if weight &gt; 10 kg, for <math>\geq 14</math> days), alkylating agents, antimetabolites, or tumor-necrosis factor</li> </ul>	<p>At least two months (56 days) following their second dose (Recommended).</p> <p>As per NACI, the minimum interval should be 28 days; however, an interval longer than the minimum 28 days between doses is likely to result in a better immune response. Exact timing should be decided with the treating provider to optimize the immune response from the vaccine series and minimize delays in management of the underlying condition.</p> <p>These individuals must have a referral form or note from their primary care provider or specialist, except those taking the eligible medication in which their prescription is acceptable proof of eligibility.</p>

<p>(TNF) inhibitors and other biologic agents that are significantly immunosuppressive (refer to page 16 &amp; 17 for a <a href="#">list of eligible medications</a>)</p>	
<p><b>Booster Doses</b> (for those at increased risk of exposure, severe disease and waning immunity)</p>	
<p>Residents of senior’s congregate settings including long-term care homes (LTCH), retirement homes (Rhome) and elder care lodges</p>	<p>At least 6 months (168 days) following their second dose.</p> <p>In Simcoe Muskoka, booster doses were initially provided in LTCH and RHome at the original provincially recommended 5-month interval.</p> <p>The 6-month interval will be used for all other senior’s congregate settings and for LTCH/Rhome residents going forward.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anyone 70 years of age or older (born in 1951)</li> <li>• Indigenous people and their non-Indigenous household members who are 16 years and older (born in 2005)</li> <li>• Health care workers who are 16 years and older (born in 2005)</li> <li>• Anyone who received a series of viral vector vaccine (2 doses of AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD or 1 dose of Jansen)</li> </ul>	<p>At least 6 months (168 days) following their second dose.</p>

The dose for anyone 12 years and older receiving Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine continues to always be 0.3 mL.

Anyone receiving Moderna for a first or second dose should receive the 0.5 mL dose.

The following table outlines the dosing for those receiving Moderna vaccine for their third / booster dose:

Eligibility	Dosage (mL)	Immunization Schedule	Minimum Interval	Recommended Interval
Severely or Moderately Immunocompromised (see table above)	0.5 ml	3 <sup>rd</sup> dose	28 days	8 weeks (56 days)
Residents of seniors congregate living settings (LTCHs, Rhomes, Elder Care Lodges) regardless of age	0.5 ml	Booster dose	6 months (168 days)	
Anyone 70+	0.5 ml	Booster dose	6 months (168 days)	
Anyone less than 70 years of age not included in the groups above that is eligible for a booster dose as per the table above	0.25 ml	Booster doses only	6 months (168 days)	

### Community Clinic Update

Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit community clinics opened this week, and are now accepting those eligible for first, second or third doses by appointment and now by walk in. The 29 Sperling Clinic also continues to operate Sunday to Thursday from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. by appointment and walk in. Appointments for health unit clinics and the 29 Sperling COVID-19 Vaccine clinic are available using the provincial booking system. The health unit has loaded appointments up to and including Monday November 22, 2021 at this time. As noted in our previous Public Health Alert, when vaccine is approved for children 5-11 the health unit community clinics will transition to be by-appointment only and will focus on this child population. Health Canada is in the final stages of their review process, and we understand that an approval is imminent. It is expected that vaccine will be available to start administering once approved within one week in Ontario. We will send out a Public Health Alert in the days following approval with program details and vaccine ordering information.

Those who are eligible for boosters or third doses during the time that health unit clinics are focused on children are encouraged to access vaccine through their primary care provider, pharmacy, the COVID-19 Clinic at 29 Sperling Drive in Barrie, clinic offered at [Orillia Soldiers Memorial Hospital](#), GOVAXX bus or other regional options listed on our website.

### Reduced After Care Wait Time for Health Care Workers (HCWs)

The [Ministry of Health - Third Dose guidance document](#) has been updated to include the provision of a 5 to 15 mins (instead of 15 mins) after care wait time option for HCWs receiving their third dose in a health care facility provided they had no issues following their initial two doses.

### 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](http://www.smdhu.org/hpportal) as well as through [Public Health Ontario](#) and the [Government of Ontario](#).