

COVID-19 Vaccine: Update #58

Bivalent COVID-19 Vaccine Now Available for Boosters

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: September 12, 2022

The COVID-19 bivalent Original/Omicron mRNA vaccine (Moderna) is now available in Ontario. Bivalent COVID-19 vaccine has been recommended by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) for booster doses in those 18 years of age and older. NACI also supports off-label use of Bivalent vaccine for 12- to 17-year-olds who are severely or moderately immunocompromised who are currently eligible for a booster dose.

Booster dose(s) are recommended based on the ongoing risk of infection due to waning immunity, the ongoing risk of severe illness from COVID-19, the societal disruption that results from transmission of infections and the adverse impacts on the health system from the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on experience in the southern hemisphere, we are anticipating potentially an earlier and more active respiratory illness season this fall, so ensuring good protection, especially for those who are most at risk, will help protect our communities.

Starting September 12, 2022 the following high-risk groups are recommended to receive their fall COVID-19 bivalent (Moderna) booster dose:

- Residents of long-term care homes (LTCH), retirement homes (Rhomes), Elder Care Lodges, and adults living in other congregate settings that provide assisted-living and health services.
- Those 70 years of age and older.
- First Nations, Inuit, Metis (FNIM) individuals and their non-Indigenous household members 18 years of age and older.
- Individuals who are 12 years and older who are moderately or severely immunocompromised.
 - For those 12 to 17 years of age who are moderately or severely immunocompromised, a booster dose of the bivalent Moderna COVID-19 vaccine may be offered off-label based on clinic discretion.



- Pregnant individuals who are 18 years and older.
- Health care workers who are 18 years of age and older (including essential caregivers in LTCH & Rhomes).

As of September 26, 2022 everyone 18 years of age and older will be eligible to receive a fall COVID-19 bivalent (Moderna) booster dose regardless of the number of booster doses previously received. While NACI recommends that bivalent Omicron-containing mRNA COVID-19 vaccine should be offered as a booster dose to the authorized age group, if the bivalent vaccine is not readily available or if someone refuses the bivalent vaccine, an original mRNA COVID-19 vaccine should be offered for timely protection.

Interval Between Previous Doses of COVID-19 Vaccine or SARS-CoV-2 Infection and Booster Doses

For those who have recently been infected with SARS-CoV-2, a minimum interval of 3 months (84 days) after symptom onset or positive test if asymptomatic is suggested, however a 6-month (168 days) interval may provide better immune response.

It is recommended that COVID-19 booster doses be offered at an interval of 6 months (168 days) after a previous COVID-19 vaccine, however a 3-month (84 days) interval may be used if the person wants their booster dose sooner with informed consent.

The current vaccine available is the Moderna bivalent B1 Omicron strain formulation. The Pfizer bivalent B1 formulation is currently being reviewed by Health Canada and is likely to be available before the end of September. An Omicron B4/B5 strain formulation being used in the United States will likely become available in Canada later this winter but has currently not been submitted for review by Health Canada.

Ordering COVID-19 Bivalent Vaccine

The COVID-19 bivalent Original/Omicron mRNA vaccine (Moderna) has been added to our Vaccine Order form. We have been working with hospitals and seniors' congregate facilities to provide them an initial supply of the vaccine. Subsequent orders for additional supply for these facilities and any primary care providers who have been providing COVID-19 vaccines in their practices can order the bivalent vaccine using our revised [Vaccine Order Form](#). Orders received by Wednesday September 14th at 3:00 p.m. will be available for pick up in your local public health office on Wednesday September 21, 2022.

The health unit will continue offering COVID-19 immunization clinics in all health unit offices and pop-up clinics as we are able to, but as we have resumed other immunization activities our capacity for such will be limited. Primary care providers are asked to assist by providing COVID-19 vaccine for their patients. If you have previously been set up in COVAX and need a password reset, please email covaxsupport@smdhu.org. If you have not previously offered COVID-19 vaccine in your practice and would like to onboard now to offer the vaccine, please email vaccineorders@smdhu.org and one of our staff will be in contact.

Vaccine Information:

- Stable in thawed state for 30 days – the thawed expiry date will be written on the package you receive.
- Once the vial is punctured, it is stable for 24 hours.

- The vaccine does not require reconstitution. It is ready to use directly from the vial.
- The vials are 5 dose vials (2.5 mL vials = 5 x 0.5 mL doses).
- The same dose of the bivalent vaccine is used for all groups: 50 mcg of mRNA = 0.5 mL.

Note: If your facility is storing the Moderna Pediatric vaccine, the vial caps are unfortunately the same color. The bivalent vaccine has a green border on the vial label, while the pediatric one has a blue border. There will be coloured stickers clearly noting which product is in your package, but please use caution if storing both products by storing them separately in your fridge.

Local Implementation Plans

- Hospitals are assisting with vaccinating their own staff, eligible inpatients and those who attend outpatient programs who are eligible (i.e. dialysis, cancer patients).
- During these initial two weeks, public health will be focusing on supporting LTCH, Rhomes, and FNIM communities with mobile vaccination and maintaining our already scheduled clinics.
- Our COVID-19 community clinic at Georgian Mall will not be accepting walk-ins for bivalent boosters at this time. Pop-up clinics throughout Simcoe and Muskoka and the RVH 29 Sperling Drive Clinic in Barrie will accommodate walk-ins as they are able to, based on demand. We have been advised that the GO-VAXX bus will not be accepting walk-ins at this time.
- We are planning to add additional pop-up clinics and GO-VAXX clinics throughout Simcoe and Muskoka as we can the weeks of September 19, 2022 and 26, 2022. These will be in addition to office clinics, pop ups and GO-VAXX already planned. All clinics will be posted on our website and appointments can be booked through the [Provincial Vaccine Appointment Booking System](#).

The following options for COVID-19 vaccination continue and will be available through the fall:

- [Local pharmacies](#).
- Health Unit office-based clinics throughout Simcoe Muskoka - appointments available through the [Provincial Vaccine Appointment Booking System](#).
- Community clinic at Georgian Mall in Barrie - appointments available through the [Provincial Vaccine Appointment Booking System](#) – closed to walk-ins at this time.
- [RVH COVID-19 vaccination clinic](#) at 29 Sperling Drive in Barrie – appointments available through the Provincial Vaccine Appointment Booking System and walk ins may be accommodated based on demand.
- [Couchiching OHT COVID-19 vaccination clinic](#) in Orillia at OSMH Kiwanis Building - West Entrance, 170 Colborne St. West.
- GO-VAXX bus throughout Simcoe Muskoka – to access the schedule [click here](#).

Additional COVID-19 Vaccine Information

For more detailed information about eligibility and guidance, please refer to the [Ministry of Health COVID-19 Vaccine Guidance](#) document.

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

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