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COVID-19 Vaccine: Update #22 AstraZeneca Vaccine On Hold Effective Immediately

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: May 11, 2021

Effective immediately, Ontario is pausing further administration of first doses of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.

This decision was made out of an abundance of caution due to an observed increase in the rare blood clotting condition, known as vaccine-induced immune thrombotic thrombocytopenia (VITT), linked to the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.

As of May 8, 2021, 651,012 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine were administered with a rate of VITT of 0.9 per 100,000 doses administered. 202,873 doses of the COVISHIELD vaccine were administered with a rate of VITT of 1 per 100,000 doses administered. However, over last few days, there have been increased reports of VITT, with a rate of 1.7 per 100,000 doses administered. The Ministry of Health in collaboration with experts at Public Health Ontario, the Science Advisory Table and federal, provincial and territorial partners will continue to review the data to consider options for the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine for second doses and more broadly moving forward.

Data from the UK points to a much-reduced risk of VITT in second doses of AstraZeneca, and more guidance will be provided in advance of people's needing to receive their second dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine. There are also early promising results of administering two doses of different vaccines and the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) is expected to provide direction on the interchangeability of COVID-19 vaccines.

The decision to pause is also based on the increased and reliable supply of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna mRNA vaccines and the downward trend in COVID-19 cases.



For those health care providers and pharmacies with remaining AstraZeneca vaccine in your inventory, continue to maintain it at 2-8°C in a monitored vaccine fridge and maintain temperatures. Please ensure that all doses that have been administered and your inventory are up to date in COVAX ASAP.

Additional 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](#).