

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 #41

### National Advisory Committee on Immunization: Recommendation for Third Doses and Changes to Prefilled Syringe Pick Up Process

**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:** October 29, 2021

---

**Today the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) announced the following recommendations for third doses of COVID-19 vaccine:**

NACI **strongly** recommends that populations at highest risk of waning protection following their primary series and at highest risk of severe COVID-19 illness **should** be offered a booster dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine **at least 6 months** after completing their primary series. These populations include:

- Adults living in long-term care or other congregate settings that provide care for seniors (as previously recommended)
- Adults 80 years of age and older

NACI also recommends that other key populations who may be at increased risk of lower protection over time since vaccination, increased risk of severe illness, or who are essential for maintaining health system capacity, **may** be offered a booster dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine **at least 6 months** after completing their primary series. These populations include:

- Adults 70 to 79 years of age;
- People who received two doses of the AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD vaccine or one dose of the Janssen vaccine;
- Adults in or from First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities; and
- Adults who are frontline healthcare workers who have direct in-person contact with patients and who were vaccinated with a very short interval.



Evidence to-date shows that COVID-19 vaccines provide lasting protection against serious illness and death from COVID-19. There is currently no evidence of widespread waning of protection against severe disease in the general Canadian population who have been vaccinated against COVID-19. Lower vaccine effectiveness against severe disease has mainly been identified in residents in long-term care homes, with some evidence of decreased effectiveness in elderly adults, particularly those 80 years of age and over.

Emerging evidence suggests vaccine effectiveness against asymptomatic infection and mild COVID-19 disease may decrease over time, particularly in those with a shorter interval between doses in a primary series. A booster dose could help restore and maintain protection against infection in certain populations. It is currently unknown how long effectiveness from a booster dose may last.

**An announcement from the Ministry of Health is expected next week, outlining plans for third doses in Ontario based on these recommendations. It is important to note that third doses will not be available to these groups until an announcement is made and details on implementation provided.**

We will send a Public Health Alert next week once the provincial announcement is made, with details about how this will be rolled out locally.

The health unit is working with Indigenous community partners to plan for dedicated clinics for First Nations communities and urban Indigenous peoples shortly after they become eligible provincially.

When the province proceeds with age 70+ in the general population, the majority will not be eligible for their third dose until December, based on the 6-month interval required between second and third doses.

The health unit will be re-opening community based COVID-19 vaccine clinics in mid-November to support third doses and the immunization of children 5 to 11 years when the vaccine is approved by Health Canada for this group. Once a provincial announcement on third doses is made next week, those eligible now will be able to access the vaccine through their employer, some primary care providers, pharmacies, the GOVAXX bus, or the 29 Sperling Drive Barrie COVID-19 vaccine clinic. The community-based clinics, including the 29 Sperling Drive Barrie COVID-19 vaccine clinic, will be providing third doses on an appointment basis only. Details on how to book appointments will be provided in next week's public health alert.

COVID-19 vaccine continues to be available through some primary care providers, pharmacies, pop-up clinics, the GOVAXX bus, and the 29 Sperling Drive Barrie COVID-19 vaccine clinic for anyone 12+ needing their first or second dose, and for those who have been eligible for third doses since September including:

- Transplant recipients (including solid organ transplant and hematopoietic stem cell transplants);
- Patients with hematological cancers (examples include lymphoma, myeloma, leukemia) on active treatment (chemotherapy, targeted therapies, immunotherapy);
- Recipients of an anti-CD20 agent (e.g. rituximab, ocrelizumab, ofatumumab); and
- Those undergoing active treatment for solid tumors;
- Those who are in receipt of chimeric antigen receptor (CAR)-T-cell;
- Those with moderate or severe primary immunodeficiency (e.g., DiGeorge syndrome, Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome);
- Stage 3 or advanced untreated HIV infection and those with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome; and

- 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, alkylating agents, antimetabolites, or tumor-necrosis factor (TNF) inhibitors and other biologic agents that are significantly immunosuppressive.

The 29 Sperling Drive Barrie COVID-19 vaccine clinic continues to offer immunization to these groups above on a drop-in basis.

The health unit continues to work with long-term care homes, retirement homes and elder care lodges, as well as other seniors congregate settings to ensure third doses are provided to all residents.

### **COVID-19 Vaccine Prefilled Syringe Pick Up – Process Change**

With the resumption of our community-based clinics, and mobile teams doing clinics in retirement homes currently, we need to change the process for provision of prefilled syringes to health care providers. Please continue to order using our [online form](#), and one of our team members will connect with you to coordinate a date, time and pick up location based on our clinic schedule in your community. While we recognize not having a set day of the week may make planning challenging, we will have community clinic locations established by mid-November which will make availability of this service more predictable at that time.

### **COVID-19 Vaccination for 5- to 11-Year-Olds**

Health Canada is currently reviewing data from Pfizer-BioNTech for a COVID-19 vaccine for children aged 5 to 11 years. While we wait for approval and direction from Health Canada, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) and the Province of Ontario, we have added a page on our website dedicated to providing information and updates to the public on COVID-19 vaccination for [Children 5 to 11 years of age](#). This resource may be of interest to your patients at this time.

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