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COVID-19 Vaccine: Update #45

Booster Eligibility Expanded to 50+, Dialysis Patients Now Eligible for Third Doses, Small Supply of Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine Available and Pediatric COVID-19 Vaccine Updates

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: December 3, 2021

Yesterday the province announced that those **50 years of age and older** (born in 1971 and earlier) are eligible for a booster dose of COVID-19 vaccine at a 6-month (168-day) interval from their second dose starting on Monday **December 13, 2021**. At that time, they will join other people who are now eligible in being able to access their booster via the following channels:

- 29 Sperling Drive, Barrie COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic – those eligible can walk in (Sunday to Thursday from 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.) or book an appointment through the [COVID-19 vaccination portal](#) or by calling the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre at 1-833-943-3900
- Couchiching Ontario Health Team Clinics at Orillia Soldiers Memorial Hospital – by appointment available at the following [link](#)
- Cottage Country Family Health Team in Gravenhurst and the Algonquin Family Health Team in Huntsville – by appointment through the [COVID-19 vaccination portal](#) or by calling the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre at 1-833-943-3900
- [Participating pharmacies](#)
- [GOVAXX Bus](#)
- Through some primary care providers

As soon as demand at Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit community clinics for 5 to 11 year-olds decreases, these clinics will be open to booster doses as well.



Beginning in January, Ontario will further expand eligibility for booster doses based on age and risk, with an interval of six to eight months from the second dose.

This morning, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) released their [Guidance on booster COVID-19 vaccine doses in Canada](#). After reviewing the recent evidence and the evolving COVID-19 pandemic in the Canadian context, they have updated their booster recommendations as follows:

NACI strongly recommends a booster dose of an authorized mRNA COVID-19 vaccine should be offered at least 6 months after completion of a primary COVID-19 vaccine series to the following groups:

- People aged 50 years and older
- Adults living in long-term care homes for seniors or other congregate living settings that provide care for seniors
- Recipients of a viral vector vaccine series completed with only viral vector vaccines (AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD or Janssen COVID-19 vaccine)
- Adults in or from First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities
- All frontline healthcare workers having direct in-person contact with patients

NACI now also recommends that a booster dose of an authorized mRNA COVID-19 vaccine may be offered to adults 18 to 49 years of age at least 6 months after completion of a primary COVID-19 vaccine series with consideration of jurisdictional and individual risks as outlined in the full NACI Statement.

At this time provincially, only those 50+ are becoming eligible for boosters on December 13th, 2021 and we will provide further updates if any additional age bands are added to the provincial eligibility.

Dialysis Patients Now Eligible for Third Doses and Repeat COVID-19 Vaccination for HSCT & CAR-T-cell Therapy Recipients

Due to a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, effective immediately individuals receiving dialysis (hemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis) are eligible to receive a third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Dialysis patients have been added to the eligibility group of severely or moderately immunocompromised, meaning they are eligible for a third dose to complete their primary series. The third dose should be administered 8 weeks (56 days) after their second dose but can be administered anytime after 28 days if recommended by their treating physician to coincide with their treatment regime.

For additional information, please refer to the updated [COVID-19 Vaccine Third Dose Recommendations](#) document.

Effective immediately, the province is recommending re-vaccination with a new COVID-19 vaccine primary series post-transplantation for individuals who receive hematopoietic stem cell transplants (HSCT), hematopoietic cell transplants (HCT) (autologous or allogeneic), and recipients of CAR-T-cell therapy, due to the loss of immunity following therapy or transplant.

For additional information, please refer to the updated [COVID-19 Vaccination Recommendations for Special Populations](#) document.

Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) COVID-19 Vaccine

A very small supply of this vaccine is now available provincially and can be accessed by health units for clients with a contraindication to mRNA vaccine or those who refuse to receive an mRNA vaccine. We have added an [online referral form](#) that is available on our HCP website where you can refer your patients that are contraindicated to receive an mRNA vaccine and want to receive J&J vaccine, or patients who refuse to receive an mRNA vaccine as the recommended vaccine and want to receive J&J vaccine after informed consent. It is important that patients review the [Janssen Vaccine Information Sheet](#). Once we have the vaccine and we have enough individuals to receive it to make use of a 5-dose vial, public health will follow up with the clients directly to make arrangements for them to come to a central location to receive the vaccine.

The [COVID-19 Vaccine Administration Guidance Document](#) was updated to include key administration information for this vaccine but here are some highlights:

- Viral vector vaccine authorized by Health Canada for those 18 years of age and older
- One dose vaccine for primary series (although boosters have been recommended at 6 months for those who receive it), 0.5ml
- Contains Polysorbate 80 (Potential cross-reactive hypersensitivity between PEG and polysorbates has been reported in the literature)
- Common side effects: Pain, swelling, or redness/erythema at injection site, fatigue, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain, nausea/vomiting, fever
- Rare or very rare adverse events (occur in 0.01% to less than 0.1% and less than 0.01% of vaccine recipients): Vaccine-Induced Thrombotic Thrombocytopenia (VITT), Capillary Leak Syndrome (CLS), Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS)

Updated Storage and Handling Information on Pediatric Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine

The date printed on the vials and cartons of the pediatric Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is the manufactured date, not the expiry date. The vaccine is stable for up to 10 weeks at 2°C to 8°C prior to dilution, or in ultra-low temperature freezer for 6 months. When you receive pediatric Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, you will receive a notice with it indicating the date in which it was thawed, and your 10-week expiry will be from that date.

We have received confirmation that the same principals as with the adult formulation of pooling vaccine from up to three vials to create an additional dose, and the use of 11th doses out of a vial, are permitted with pediatric vaccine. Please refer to the [COVID-19: Vaccine Storage and Handling Guidance](#) for more detailed instructions.

Pre-Screening Question Update

The following was added to the COVID-19 Vaccine Precautions & Population Specific Considerations table in the [COVID-19 Vaccine Administration Guidance](#) to rule out any unrecognized peri/myocarditis

Group	Context	Action
Symptoms, either current or displayed recently, of chest pain or shortness of breath	Vaccine should not be offered to persons displaying current or recent history of chest pain or shortness of breath.	Defer vaccination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with a HCP prior to vaccination and/or if symptoms are severe, should be directed to the ER or call 911

This has been added to screen for any potential unexplained symptoms that people have not had investigated by their health care provider, to identify any cases of myocarditis or pericarditis prior to vaccination.

Immunizer Quick Reference Tool

The health unit has developed a [COVID-19 Vaccine Quick Reference Tool](#) for Immunizers. It can be accessed along with a variety of other useful tools for those providing COVID-19 vaccine on our Health Care Provider website.

Resources for COVID-19 Vaccinations for Children 5 to 11

For those who were unable to attend this information session for immunizers and other healthcare workers with Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health, and Dr. Daniel Warshafsky, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health on Friday, November 26, 2021 the [session recording, slide deck and resource list](#) are now available.

We also have posted a [template letter](#) that you are encouraged to adapt and use as health care providers to communicate with your patients about the importance of COVID-19 vaccination for 5 to 11 year olds, if you have a mechanism to do so. This letter is a local adaption of a letter template that was originally shared by the Ontario College of Family Physicians (Dr. Tara Kiran and Dr. Noah Ivers).

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](#).