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## COVID-19 Vaccine: Update #46

### Expanded Booster Eligibility to 18+, Three Month Interval for Boosters, Booster Blitz Clinic Update, Pfizer Preferred for Those Under 30 Years & Medical Exemption 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:** December 16, 2021

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The province has announced that to safeguard the province's hospitals and intensive care units (ICUs) in the face of the rapidly-spreading Omicron variant, as of Monday December 20<sup>th</sup>, everyone **18 years of age and older** (born in 2003 and earlier) will be eligible to receive their booster dose and the province will be shortening the interval for all booster doses to 3-months (84 days) following an individual's second dose.

In addition, as of yesterday, individuals aged 50 and over as well as all those currently eligible who have already booked their appointment at an interval of six months (168 days) can call the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre to re-book for an earlier date at the three-month interval and can change their appointment through [Ontario's booking portal](#) starting on Monday. **Locally, individuals at greater risk for severe disease and exposure remain the highest priority for protection from a booster dose, including previously eligible groups, those aged 50 and over, people living in congregate settings, people with health conditions, and high risk communities..**

Appointments for large-scale booster clinics starting this weekend and into next week, and community clinics through the month of January will be made available in the provincial booking system by Friday morning for clinic locations across Simcoe Muskoka (including the 29 Sperling Drive Barrie COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic and clinics being offered by the Cottage Country Family Health Team in Gravenhurst and the Algonquin Family Health Team in Huntsville clinics). Those eligible can book an appointment through the [COVID-19 vaccination portal](#) or by calling the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre at 1-833-943-3900. The following additional options continue as well for those eligible for booster doses:

- Couchiching Ontario Health Team Clinics at Orillia Soldiers Memorial Hospital – by appointment available at the following [link](#)

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- [Participating pharmacies](#)
- [GOVAXX Bus](#)
- Through some primary care providers

Appointments for 5- to 11-year-olds continue to be available at health unit community clinics by appointment which can be booked through the [COVID-19 vaccination portal](#) or by calling the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre at 1-833-943-3900.

### **Preferential Recommendation for Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine vs. Moderna Vaccine for Those Under 30**

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) is recommending that those under 30 years of age should preferentially receive Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine due to lower reported rates of myocarditis/pericarditis following vaccination with Pfizer-BioNTech (30 mcg) compared to Moderna (100 mcg) (based on second dose data) in this population. The Ministry of Health has updated the [COVID-19 Vaccine Administration](#) guidance document to reflect this updated recommendation, replacing the previous preferential recommendation which was for those under 25 years of age.

### **Booster Doses (4<sup>th</sup> Doses) for Those Who Are Moderately and Severely Immunocompromised**

Moderately to severely immunocompromised individuals who are eligible for a three-dose primary series may receive a booster dose (i.e. 4th dose) at 6 months (168 days) after completion of their extended 3 dose primary series. For additional information, please refer to the updated [COVID-19 Vaccine Third Dose Recommendations](#) document.

### **Process for Repeat COVID-19 Vaccination for HSCT, HCT & CAR-T-cell Therapy Recipients**

As per the last Public Health Alert, those who undergo HSCT, HCT & CAR-T-cell therapy after receiving their COVID-19 vaccination series should be revaccinated. The client's initial vaccine series in COVAX will need to be marked invalid, which public health is required to do. Please contact our HCP phone line at ext. 8806 and a nurse will assist you with this.

### **Medical Exemptions**

As per the recent [provincial announcement](#), those who have an eligible medical exemption or are participating in an active [Health Canada Approved COVID-19 vaccine clinical trial \(see Appendix C\)](#) will need an enhanced COVID-19 vaccine certificate with QR code. Organizations and businesses that are required to take part in Ontario's proof-of-vaccination system will no longer be able to accept physician notes beginning January 10, 2022. For more information on medical exemptions refer to the Ministry of Health [Medical Exemptions for COVID-19 Vaccination](#) document and the attached Medical Exemption form which outlines what eligible medical exemptions can be accepted.

To obtain an enhanced vaccine certificate with QR code, individuals must ask an Ontario physician or registered nurse in the extended class to submit their eligible medical exemption directly to public health. Medical exemptions issued outside of Ontario are not eligible for an enhanced vaccine certificate. Please fax any eligible medical exemptions for your patients to 705-726-3962.

For those involved in a Health Canada approved COVID-19 vaccine clinical trial, the Principal Investigator will need to submit the exemption, with the written or verbal consent of the trial participant, directly to the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre.

Once an individual's exemption is reviewed and entered into COVaxON by the public health unit, they will be able to access their enhanced vaccine certificate with QR code through the [COVID-19 vaccination portal](#).

### **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](#).