



# RENFREW COUNTY AND DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): COVID-19 Vaccines

### 1. Are the COVID-19 vaccines currently available in Renfrew County and District?

Vaccine availability and supply is currently unpredictable. Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) is working with Long-Term Care Homes to provide COVID-19 vaccinations to all residents in the coming weeks. RCDHU staff in collaboration with partners have completed on-site clinics at local Long-Term Care Homes and will continue to do so as supply allows.

### 2. What is the current status of the COVID-19 vaccines?

The provincial government has developed a three-phase implementation plan. Phase one focuses on distributing COVID-19 vaccines to priority populations in the highest risk areas first. On December 7, 2020, the province announced the key populations that will be first to receive the COVID-19 vaccine:

- Residents, employees and staff, and essential caregivers of congregate living settings that provide care for seniors;
- Health care workers (including all those who work in health care settings and those in direct contact with patients);
- Adults in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit populations where infection can have disproportionate consequences, including those living in remote or isolated areas; and
- Adult recipients of chronic home health care.

For more details visit: <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59607/ontario-begins-rollout-of-covid-19-vaccine>.

### 3. What COVID-19 vaccines are approved in Canada?

Two vaccines are currently approved for use in Canada: Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna.

1. [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine](#) can be given to people 16 years of age and older, including older adults.
2. [Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine](#) can be given to people 18 years of age and older, including older adults.

In clinical trials, both vaccines were higher than 90% effective.

There is a small chance that you may still get COVID-19 after being vaccinated. Therefore, it is very important to continue with public health measures such as physical distancing, wearing a mask, and staying home if you are sick. Health care and other staff must still wear personal

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protective equipment (PPE) even after they have been vaccinated.

### 4. How do mRNA vaccines work?

COVID-19 vaccines use messenger RNA (mRNA) which provides instructions to cells in our bodies to make a viral protein from the coronavirus called a “spike protein.” Once inside you, an mRNA vaccine triggers a reaction that acts like your own body does when a foreign substance or infection gets in. Your body recognizes the intruder – in this case, a tiny protein – and makes antibodies. These antibodies protect you against future infections. The cell breaks down and destroys the mRNA after the spike protein is created.

### 5. Can mRNA vaccines alter a person's DNA?

No. mRNA is not able to alter or modify a person's genetic makeup (DNA). The mRNA from a COVID-19 vaccine never enters the nucleus of the cell, which is where our DNA is kept. This means the mRNA does not affect or interact with our DNA in any way. Instead, COVID-19 vaccines that use mRNA work with the body's natural defenses to safely develop protection (immunity) to disease.

### 6. What are the side effects of the COVID-19 vaccines?

Some people may experience moderate side effects from the vaccine that will likely resolve after a few days. Some of the symptoms are part of the body's response to developing immunity and indicate that the vaccine is working.

Common side effects include one or more of the following symptoms: pain where the needle was given, redness and swelling, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, joint pain, chills, mild fever, swollen glands (less frequently). These types of side effects are expected and indicate that the vaccine is working to produce protection. These side effects are more likely to occur after your second dose.

As with any medicines and vaccines, allergic reactions are rare but can occur after receiving a vaccine. If you are concerned about any reactions you experience after receiving the vaccine, contact your health care provider. You can also contact Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) to ask questions or report an adverse reaction.

Visit the Health Canada webpage for more information on the side effects of the [Pfizer-BioNTech](#) or [Moderna vaccines](#). Visit the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care [COVID-19 Vaccine-Relevant Information and Planning Resources](#).

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### 7. Can the COVID-19 vaccines cause a COVID-19 infection?

No, there is no live COVID-19 in the vaccine. The goal of each of the vaccines is to teach the immune system how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19.

### 8. Why should I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Vaccination is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread and reduce the impact of infectious diseases, whether it is the seasonal flu (influenza) or childhood infections. All vaccines work by presenting our body with something that looks like the infection so that our immune system can learn how to produce natural protection. This natural protection then helps to keep us from becoming sick if we come into contact with the real virus in the future.

### 9. Who should not receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

People who have allergies to the COVID-19 vaccine ingredients should not be vaccinated. Talk to your doctor or health care provider if you are unsure.

People who have had a serious allergic reaction to the COVID-19 vaccine (first dose) should not receive a second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

### 10. What precautions should I take before receiving the COVID-19 vaccine?

Delay getting vaccinated if you have a fever or are sick with COVID-19 symptoms. This helps to avoid attributing any complications from other illness with vaccine-related adverse events, and to minimize COVID-19 transmission at an immunization site.

**To help avoid side effects and ensure proper use, talk to your healthcare professional before you receive the COVID-19 Vaccine. Talk about any health conditions or problems you may have, including if you:**

- Have any allergies or previous problems following administration of COVID-19 Vaccine, such as an allergic reaction or breathing problems.
- Have a bleeding problem, bruise easily or use a blood thinning medication.
- Have a high fever or severe infection.
- Have any serious illness.
- Have a weakened immune system due to a medical condition or are on a medicine that affects your immune system.
- Are pregnant, think you may be pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
- Are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed.

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### 11. Can individuals with severe allergies to an ingredient in the COVID-19 vaccine, still receive the vaccine?

No. People with a history of severe allergic reaction to a component of the COVID-19 vaccine should not receive the vaccine. Recommendations for people with serious allergies:

<https://healthycanadians.gc.ca/recall-alert-rappel-avis/hc-sc/2020/74543a-eng.php>.

Visit the Health Canada web page to learn who should not receive the [Pfizer-BioNTech](#) or [Moderna vaccines](#).

### 12. Can individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. Those who have previously tested positive for COVID-19 can be vaccinated because re-infection with COVID-19 is possible. You do not need a COVID-19 test prior to vaccination unless you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 (**refer to question 7**).

At this time, experts do not know how long someone is protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. The immunity developed after having an infection, called natural immunity, is different from person to person. Some early evidence suggests natural immunity may not last very long. We need more information on how well the vaccine works to be able to assess how long immunity from the vaccine will last.

### 13. Where can I find more information about the COVID-19 Vaccines?

- **Government of Canada – Recommendations on the use of COVID-19 vaccines -** <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/national-advisory-committee-on-immunization-naci/recommendations-use-covid-19-vaccines.html>
- **Government of Canada – Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine: What you should know -** <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/covid19-industry/drugs-vaccines-treatments/vaccines/pfizer-biontech.html>
- **Government of Canada – Moderna COVID-19 vaccine: What you should know -** <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/covid19-industry/drugs-vaccines-treatments/vaccines/moderna.html>
- **Ontario Government - COVID-19 vaccines for Ontario -** <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccines-ontario>
- **Ministry of Health and Long-term Care -** [COVID-19 Vaccine-Relevant Information and](#)

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[Planning Resources](#)

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