



## **Shelter, Support & Housing Administration Division**

### **City of Toronto's COVID-19 Immunization Clinic Frequently Asked Questions and Resources for Frontline Workers**

This FAQ sheet has been developed to answer questions that frontline workers may have about the City of Toronto's COVID-19 Immunization Clinic. In addition to this document, staff are encouraged to review the Government of Canada's website, [Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) Vaccines: Overview](#), the Province of Ontario's website, [COVID-19 Vaccines for Ontario](#), and City of Toronto website, [COVID-19 Vaccines](#) for additional information on the vaccines.

Note that as the situation is changing rapidly, the answers we provide today may change tomorrow based on updated circumstances and information. Please stay up to date with the most recent information to keep yourself informed.



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## New/Updated FAQ's

### **What is the City of Toronto immunization clinic proof-of-concept program? \* Updated**

On January 18, 2021 under the direction of the Ministry of Health, the City of Toronto and Toronto Public Health launched a COVID-19 immunization clinic proof-of-concept program at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. This early program will help test and adjust immunization clinic setup in non-hospital settings, ensuring safety and increasing efficiency in advance of wider immunization. The proof-of-concept will evaluate all aspects of clinic operations, including technology, logistics and operating procedure. In accordance with Provincial allocations of the COVID-19 vaccine, the goal of the initial clinic was to vaccinate 250 people per day.

This program was one part of preparing for the rollout of public immunization. It operated with a sample group of healthcare workers, identified in accordance with the [Province's Ethical Framework for COVID-19 vaccine prioritization](#). These healthcare workers were directly involved in the frontline response to COVID-19. This includes frontline shelter workers, including harm-reduction and Streets to Homes staff.

Due to COVID-19 vaccine supply shortages announced by the Government of Canada, the Province of Ontario has directed the City of Toronto to pause its proof-of-concept Immunization Clinic at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, effective January 20, 2021. As a result, the Metro Toronto Convention Centre Immunization Clinic is now closed until further notice.

### **If I attended the Vaccination Clinic on Monday January 18, 2021 or Tuesday January 19, 2021, will I still get my second immunization on the day scheduled in the Provincial system?**

Due to COVID-19 vaccine supply shortages announced by the Government of Canada, the Province of Ontario has directed the City of Toronto to pause its proof-of-concept Immunization Clinic at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, effective January 20, 2021. As a result, the Metro Toronto Convention Centre Immunization Clinic is now closed until further notice. If you received the vaccine at the clinic, you will be contacted to receive the required second dose in the recommended timeframe. The City of Toronto and the Province of Ontario do not control vaccine supply chains, but will communicate with you once vaccine supply is re-established to confirm or adjust your second dose appointment.

### **Who can I call if I attended the MTTC Vaccination Clinic and have additional questions?**

Toronto Public Health will be able to answer questions about the MTTC Vaccination Clinic at 416-338-7600.



**I am interested to learn more about the potential impacts or side effects from receiving the COVID-19 vaccine for people of Indigenous descent. Can you provide links to studies or reports that speak to the impact of the vaccine for Indigenous peoples?**

The vaccine clinic trials were conducted on volunteers in the United States. An estimated 36% of the participants identify from communities of colour. Less than one percent identified as American Indian or Alaska Native. The vaccine clinical trials did not find any difference in vaccine effectiveness among racialized groups.

- [Moderna clinic trial](#), 219 participants identified as American Indian or Alaska Native (from a total of 30,351 participants = 0.8% representation).
- [Pfizer clinic trial](#), 224 participants identified as American Indian or Alaska Native (from a total of 43,651 participants = 0.6% representation)

[Elders and residents at Wigwamen Terrace](#), an Indigenous retirement home in Toronto received the Moderna vaccine by the Anishnawbe Health Mobile Unit in early January.

Public Health [Ontario collects data on adverse events](#) after COVID-19 vaccine administration. Between December 13 and January 9:

- 134,246 vaccine doses were given in Ontario
- 21 adverse reactions was reported
- Most commonly reported adverse events were allergic skin reactions
- No serious reactions were reported

Like any medicine, the COVID-19 vaccine have side effects. Most common side effects are:

- pain, redness and swelling where the needle was given
- headache
- feeling tire
- muscle ache or joint pain
- low grade fever or chills
- nausea and vomiting

Most side effects are mild to moderate, and will go again on its own in a few days.

**For communities who have historically been mistreated by the mainstream medical system, who are distrustful of big pharma, what exists in the research and experiential testing of this vaccine to quell their fears?**

Vaccines are safe and can protect us from serious illness against COVID-19. Vaccination is a personal choice. In both Pfizer and Moderna clinic trails, Indigenous people represented less than one percent of the volunteer clinical participants. While there are gaps in the information, we continue to urge everyone to seek information from reliable sources. People need to balance the risk of disease against the risk of vaccines. To date, more than 42.2 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine has been administered in 51 countries. Vaccination is one tool that can help move us out of this pandemic.



## **Where can we access COVID-19 vaccine resources for shelter clients?**

To access resources on COVID-19 vaccines, please visit the City of Toronto [COVID-19: About the Vaccines](#) webpage. Two resource Toronto Public Health and SSHA have highlighted are a COVID-19 Vaccine [fact sheet](#) which is translated into many languages and a "[vaccine flyer](#)," which is a simplified fact sheet for individuals with lower literacy levels.

## **Section 1: City of Toronto Immunization Clinic at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre**

### **1.1 What is the City of Toronto immunization clinic proof-of-concept program?**

On January 18, 2021 under the direction of the Ministry of Health, the City of Toronto and Toronto Public Health are launching a COVID-19 immunization clinic proof-of-concept program at Metro Toronto Convention Centre located at 255 Front Street. This early program will help test and adjust immunization clinic setup in non-hospital settings, ensuring safety and increasing efficiency in advance of wider immunization. The proof-of-concept will evaluate all aspects of clinic operations, including technology, logistics and operating procedure. In accordance with Provincial allocations of the COVID-19 vaccine, the goal of the initial clinic is to vaccinate 250 people per day. This program is one part of preparing for the rollout of public immunization. It will operate with a sample group of frontline workers, identified in accordance with the Province's Ethical Framework for COVID-19 vaccine prioritization. These workers are directly involved in the frontline response to COVID-19. This includes frontline shelter workers, including harm-reduction and Streets to Homes staff.

### **1.2 Is the Toronto Immunization Clinic available for clients in shelters?**

This clinic is not open to clients. SSHA is continuing to work with the Province and the City's Vaccine Taskforce to plan for the broader roll-out of the vaccine to all people experiencing homelessness, including people living outside and in encampments.

### **1.3 How can I book or change my appointment?**

You will receive a URL to register for your appointment. When workers are asked which priority group applies to them, they should select "Shelter Workers." Please follow the instruction shared with you in your invitation.

You will be able to select your preferred date and time for your appointment (unavailable time slots are clearly marked and you will not be able to book an appointment for that time.) If you need to change your appointment you will need to cancel your confirmed appointment and schedule a new one. For more instructions on how to book your appointment, please refer to Appendix A.

### **1.4 Will the family members (living in the same household) of front line workers be eligible for this clinic?**

Not at this time. Not at this time, at this time, the vaccine is being prioritized for a sample group of frontline workers, identified in accordance with the Province's Ethical Framework for COVID-19 vaccine prioritization.



### 1.5 Who is in charge of the clinic?

Under the direction from the Ontario Ministry of Health, the City of Toronto and Toronto Public Health are operating this COVID-19 Immunization Clinic.

### 1.6 Where is the clinic located?

The clinic will operate inside the Metro Toronto Convention Centre (MTCC), in Exhibition Hall A, at 255 Front Street West. Please see Appendix B or directions and parking instructions.

### 1.7 What are the hours of operation?

Hours of operation for immunization appointments will be from 11 a.m. through 8 p.m., 7 days per week.

### 1.8 What is the anticipated time window to complete vaccination – from arrival to departure after the observation period?

Approximately 1 hour.

### 1.9 Is paid parking available?

Yes, the Metro Toronto Convention Centre (MTCC) will offer 1 hour of free parking. The MTCC will have a dedicated parking attendant to direct you. Parking is available at the North garage, you will be required to take a ticket when you enter. When exiting the garage, there will be a designated line with signage for you to follow. Please see Appendix B or directions and parking instructions.

### 1.10 Will staff be receiving both doses?

Yes, when staff register for their appointment they will book both appointments 28 days apart.

### 1.11 Is an OHIP card or ID required to get a vaccine?

Identification is required to participate in this program. An OHIP card is preferred; however, if you do not have your OHIP card, please bring another form of government issued photo ID such as a driver's license, passport, Status Card or other provincial health card.

### 1.12 What should I do before/when arriving to the clinic for my vaccination?

Review the Confirmation Form attached to your invitation. This form will help you decide whether the COVID-19 vaccine is right for you, and whether you need to talk to your health care provider about the vaccine. **If you have any of the conditions listed on this form, please talk to your health care provider and bring page 2 of the Confirmation Form with you to your COVID-19 vaccine appointment.**



The appointment will take less than one hour from beginning to end. Actively screen yourself for symptoms of COVID-19 before leaving home:

- Stay home and reschedule your appointment if you have symptoms, even if they are mild.
- Wear a short-sleeve shirt or a top with loose sleeves that can be rolled up.
- Have something to eat before coming to the clinic.
- Bring some ID, see 1.12 for details.
- You will be screened for COVID-19 symptoms again before entering the clinic.
- Wear a mask that can cover your nose, mouth and chin when at the clinic.
- Follow public health measures including sanitizing your hands, keep 2 metre distancing from others, and follow any signs or instructions provided at the clinic.
- Be prepared to remain at the clinic for 15 minutes after vaccination so nurses can monitor for any reactions.

### **1.13 If staff choose to not to use this opportunity, when is the next opportunity for them to get vaccinated?**

There will be additional opportunities to receive the vaccine. However, those dates have not been confirmed at this time.

## **Section 2: Medical Inquiries**

### **2.1 I don't have an immunization record, will this have an impact on my ability to receive the vaccine?**

Staff who do not have an immunization record will not be prevented from receiving the vaccination. You are encouraged to bring your immunization record to keep track of this vaccination.

### **2.2 Who will have access to my healthcare and vaccine record?**

The Province of Ontario Ministry of Health is responsible for the information entered into the vaccine booking system. When you book your appointment you will be required to review and provide consent. SSHA will not receive your personal healthcare or vaccination record.

### **2.3 What are the benefits of getting the vaccine?**

Safe and reliable vaccines can help protect you and your family from COVID-19. Taking the vaccine will be an important step to help stop the spread of the virus. When a large percentage of the population becomes immune to COVID-19, the spread of the virus will slow down or stop.





## 2.4 Is the vaccine safe?

Health Canada only approves a vaccine if it is supported by very robust scientific data and evidence. The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines were authorized by Health Canada after a thorough and independent review determined that they met stringent safety, efficacy and quality requirements. After approval, Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada continue to monitor the ongoing safety and effectiveness of all approved vaccines.

In general, the side effects observed during the clinical trials are similar to what you might have with other vaccines. The side effects that followed vaccine administration in clinical trials for this vaccine were mild or moderate. They included things like pain at the site of injection, body chills, feeling tired and feeling feverish. These are common side effects of vaccines and do not pose a risk to health.

As with all vaccines, there's a chance that there will be a serious side effect, but these are rare. A serious side effect might be something like an allergic reaction. Health Canada has conducted a rigorous scientific review of the available medical evidence to assess the safety of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. No major safety concerns have been identified in the data that they reviewed.

## 2.5 What testing has been done for this vaccine?

Vaccines are first tested on animals to evaluate its safety and potential to prevent disease. It is then tested in human clinical trials, in three phases:

- Phase one: the vaccine is given to a small number of volunteers to assess its safety, confirm it generates an immune response and determine dosage.
- Phase two: the vaccine is given to hundreds of volunteers to monitor for side effects and immune response.
- Phase three: the vaccine is given to thousands of volunteers; some received the vaccine while others were given a placebo.

After a vaccine is approved for use, it continues to be monitored for any unexpected or rare side effects.

## 2.6 What are some common side effects of the vaccine?

Like any medical treatments, some people may have side effects from the vaccine. Common side effects include a sore arm, muscle aches or mild fever may occur, and last only a few days. These symptoms are part of the body's natural response when developing immunity.

## 2.7 Who should not get this vaccine?

Do not get this vaccine, if you:

- are under the age of 18
- have allergies to polyethylene glycol (PEG), tromethamin or any vaccine ingredients



- had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of this vaccine

Defer getting this vaccine, if you:

- have a fever or COVID-19 symptoms
- have received a flu vaccine or any other vaccine in the past 14 days

Talk to your health care provider first, if you:

- are pregnant, could be pregnant or breastfeeding
- have an autoimmune disorder
- are immunosuppressed because of an illness or therapy
- have a bleeding disorder

Consult your health care provider for a possible allergy referral, if you:

- had a severe allergy to polyethylene glycol
- had a severe immediate allergic reaction (within 4 hours) to a vaccine or other injectable medications

If you have a history of severe allergic reactions to food, drugs, insect bites or environmental, talk to your health care provider about staying at the clinic for 30 minutes after the vaccine for observation.

Please review the Confirmation Form included with your invitation for more information about whether you need to speak to your health care provider about the vaccine.

## **2.8 What about people with anaphylaxis?**

If you have a history of severe allergic reactions (including anaphylaxis) to food, drugs, insect bites or environmental exposures, talk to your health care provider about staying at the clinic for 30 minutes after the vaccine for additional observation.

## **2.9 Should I get immunized if I have had COVID-19?**

Some people may have had COVID-19 and recovered. It is still recommended that they get vaccinated. There is some evidence to suggest that natural immunity from a COVID-19 illness may not last very long. It is best to get vaccinated to stay protected.

## **2.10 What are the worst side effects of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines that we've seen here in Canada?**

Health Canada has conducted a rigorous scientific review of the available medical evidence to assess the safety of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. No major safety concerns have been identified in the data they reviewed. As with all vaccines, there is a chance that there will be a serious side effect but these are rare. A serious side effect might be something like an allergic reaction which immunizers are prepared to treat. If you have concerns about the side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine, please discuss these with your healthcare providers.



## 2.11 Some people have reported migraines, how should these be treated and how long do they typically last?

Similar to medications and other vaccines, the COVID-19 vaccine can cause side effects although not everyone will experience these. Most side effects are minor and don't last very long. Examples of common side effects that have been reported for both the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine and the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine include pain, redness or swelling where the needle was given, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain, and fever. Additional symptoms of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine may include nausea, vomiting or enlarged lymph nodes (swollen glands) in your underarm. The above symptoms are common, expected reactions, and will usually resolve on their own within a few days. They will likely begin within one to two days of vaccination. If you need information related to the management of any side effect or have concerns about possible side effects, please contact your healthcare professional.

## 2.12 What is in each of the vaccines?

The COVID-19 vaccines do not contain eggs, gelatin, preservatives or antibiotics. People with allergies to any vaccine ingredients listed below should not take this vaccine.

The vaccine that will be given at the Immunization Clinic is the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine.

active ingredient	mRNA (messenger ribonucleic acid)
lipids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ lipid SM-102</li><li>▪ 1,2-distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine (DSPC)</li><li>▪ PEG2000 DMG (1,2-dimyristoyl-rac-glycerol, methoxy-polyethyleneglycol)</li><li>▪ Cholesterol</li></ul>
salts, sugars &	potassium chloride, monobasic potassium phosphate, sodium chloride, dibasic sodium phosphate dehydrate,

This vaccine does not contain eggs, gelatin, preservatives or antibiotics and it does not contain live virus. More information can be found on the City of Toronto website [COVID-19 Vaccine](#).

## 2.13 What allergies should be taken into consideration?

- Consult your health care provider for a possible allergy referral, if you:
- had a severe allergy to polyethylene glycol
- had a severe or immediate allergic reaction (within 4 hours) to a vaccine or other injectable medications



If you have a history of severe allergic reactions to food, drugs, insect bites or environmental exposures, talk to your health care provider about staying at the clinic for 30 minutes after the vaccine for observation.

If you have a severe reaction to the COVID-19 vaccine should not take the second dose.

**2.14 What is the age limit for the vaccines? It says consult MD for certain ages, what are the considerations for younger people?**

The Moderna COVID-19 vaccine was authorized for use in people 18 years of age or older to protect against COVID-19. This is because the clinical trials for this vaccine did not include people under the age of 18. We expect that at some time in the future Health Canada may approve a vaccine for children and understand that Moderna has recently begun testing its vaccine in 12- to 17-year-olds.

**2.15 How did it get developed and approved so quickly, when these things usually take longer?**

Standards of safety, efficacy and quality have not been compromised to expedite the approval of COVID-19 vaccines. Monitoring of the vaccine's safety and effectiveness will continue now and into the future. The development of vaccines for COVID-19 is progressing quickly for many reasons including:

- International collaboration among scientists, health professionals, researchers, industry and governments who had been paying attention to coronaviruses [the family of viruses that cause SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) and MERS (Middle East respiratory syndrome)], and some had been working on new kinds of vaccines to protect against these related viruses.
- Increased funding to allow for multiple trials and product testing simultaneously to shorten timelines.
- Quick adaptation of existing research programs such as those focusing on mRNA- and viral-vector-based technology

**2.16 What are the main differences between the different brands of vaccine?**

While the two vaccines use the same technology (the MRNA spike protein), have similar efficacy, including across racial and ethnic groups, side effects (from clinical trials) and both require two doses several days apart, there are a few differences in how they must be stored and handled and who can take the vaccine.

	<b>Pfizer-BioNTech</b>	<b>Moderna</b>
Dosage	0.3 mL (30 mcg of mRNA)	0.5 mL (100 mcg of mRNA)
Schedule	Two shots of the vaccine — 21 days apart — are required for it to be fully effective.	Two shots are required, 28 days apart.
Who can take the vaccine	People 16 years old and older	People 18 years old and older



Storage requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longterm storage in an ultra-cold freezer @ -80°C to -60°C and</li> <li>• Before administering it can be stored 120 hours (5 days) at +2°C to +8°C and/or</li> <li>• 2 hours up to +25°C</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longterm storage in a regular freezer @ -25°C to -15°C and</li> <li>• 30 days at +2°C to +8°C and/or</li> <li>• 12 hours at +8°C to +25°C</li> </ul>
Efficacy from clinical trials	95% efficacy	94.1% efficacy

**2.17 Are there medical conditions that make it contraindicated to the vaccine?**

Prior to scheduling your immunization appointment please review and complete the Confirmation Form. This form will help you decide whether the COVID-19 vaccine is right for you, and whether you need to talk to your health care provider about the vaccine. If you have any of the conditions listed on this form, please talk to your health care provider and bring page 2 of the "Confirmation Form" with you to your COVID-19 vaccine appointment.

**2.18 Should I be immunized if I'm pregnant, breastfeeding or planning on becoming pregnant?**

It is not known if the vaccine is safe in pregnancy because it has not been studied in pregnant people. It is important to consult with your health care provider about the risks and benefits of receiving the COVID-19 vaccine given your specific situation if you are pregnant, if you could be pregnant or are breastfeeding. It is also recommended that you wait at least a month, after your second dose, before trying to get pregnant.

**2.19 If a person receives the first dose of the vaccine but misses the second dose, do they need to start the vaccination process over?**

Ideally, the second dose should be given 28 days after the first dose. If you miss your second appointment, do schedule another appointment as early as possible. There is no need to re-start the series.

**2.20 Are staff going to be asked to get a COVID-19 test before going to receive the vaccine considering that there is a high percent of people with no symptoms?**

No, a COVID-19 test result is not required prior to getting the vaccine.

**2.21 What if you have a reaction or experience side effects at home, where do you go to get treatment?**

Serious side effects after receiving the vaccine are rare. However, should you develop any of the following adverse reactions within three days of receiving the vaccine, **seek medical attention right away or call 911 if you are severely unwell:**

- hives
- swelling of the face or mouth
- trouble breathing
- very pale colour and serious drowsiness



- high fever (over 40°C)
- convulsions or seizures
- other serious symptoms (e.g., “pins and needles” or numbness).

After accessing care, your healthcare provider will inform your local public health unit of any serious side effects after vaccination. If you are concerned about any reactions you experience after receiving the vaccine, contact your healthcare provider. You can also contact Toronto Public Health to ask questions or report an adverse reaction.

Contact your health care provider if you have any unusual symptoms after receiving the vaccine. Symptoms may include:

- A high fever (greater than 40°C).
- An allergic reaction (rash, hives, itching, throat swelling, difficulty swallowing/breathing).
- Severe vomiting, diarrhea and/or headache.
- Reactions that do not go away after a few days.
- Reactions not listed as part of common side effects in the fact sheet

### **Section 3: Labour Inquiries**

#### **3.1 Is the vaccine mandatory for frontline staff and can I refuse to take it?**

The vaccine is voluntary, everyone is strongly encouraged to get vaccinated for their protection and the protection of others close to them. The prioritization by the Province of Ontario of your eligibility to be vaccination is in recognition of the risks encountered in your daily work and your service in protecting our most vulnerable. You can still go to work without getting the vaccine.

#### **3.2 Will frontline staff be paid if they get vaccinated on their own time?**

If operations permit, staff may be released to obtain the vaccine while on duty. Employees will not be compensated to get the vaccine on their own time if they are unable to be released while on duty. Staff should work with their site manager to make alternate arrangements to receive the vaccine.

#### **3.3 For organizations who are funded by the City, will the City cover this cost?**

No, please refer to 3.3.

#### **3.4 As it is voluntary to take the COVID-19 vaccination, will there be ramifications for not taking the vaccination regarding employment with the City of Toronto?**

No, employment at City of Toronto is not contingent on vaccination.

#### **3.5 What if an employer refuses to employ or book staff who don't accept an early vaccine?**

The COVID-19 vaccination program is voluntary, please refer to 3.2.



### **3.6 Will PPE and physical distancing protocols change after vaccines are distributed?**

All safety protocols (including PPE and physical distancing) remain in place until further notice. Staff should continue to be vigilant even after they are vaccinated. These measures will remain in place until vaccines are more widely available.