



COVID-19 Vaccine [Developed by AstraZeneca]

March 9, 2021

Risks from having COVID-19

[COVID-19](#) is a viral infection that mainly affects the lungs. The risk of getting COVID-19 may also be higher for some people because of where they live or work. Some people may have a mild illness, but others can get very sick, including seniors or people with a health condition. The virus can also cause injury to the lungs, heart, brain and other organs, increasing the risk of long-term health issues. In very rare cases, some children with COVID-19 can get a serious inflammatory condition.

How the Vaccine Works

The AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD vaccine uses a weakened cold virus to carry the instructions for our body to make "spike proteins." Spike proteins are found on the surface of the coronavirus that causes COVID-19. The cold virus has been modified so you will not get a cold from it. Our body will make antibodies against the spike protein to protect us from illness if we are exposed to COVID-19. Millions of people around the world have been vaccinated against COVID-19 using this vaccine. The vaccine does not have the COVID-19 virus in it and so it cannot give you COVID-19.

Vaccine Benefits

In the research trials, all COVID-19 vaccines were shown to protect against getting sick and very ill from COVID-19. The AstraZeneca/ COVISHIELD vaccine is currently intended for adults 18 to 64 years of age. The vaccine is also safe for people with stable health conditions such diabetes and high blood pressure.

It takes two weeks after vaccination for our body to build a good immune response against COVID-19. A second dose is needed for longer lasting protection.

Side Effects and Risks

Similar to the flu vaccine, some people may have side effects after vaccination – most are mild and go away in a few days. Common side effects include redness, pain, itchy or swelling at the injection site, fever, headache, feeling tired, muscle aches, joint pain, chills, nausea and/or vomiting.

Side effects tend to last one to three days and usually mean our body is developing an immune response to the virus. In rare cases, serious allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) can occur. Allergic reactions can be treated and are usually temporary. Seek medical attention if you have trouble breathing, hives, or swelling of the face and throat. If you have a reaction to the vaccine, tell your



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health care provider and they will report the symptoms directly to public health. Public health is tracking reported side effects to ensure the vaccine continues to be safe.

Delay vaccination

If you have a fever or COVID-19 symptoms, wait until you are feeling better. COVID-19 vaccines should also not be given at the same time as other vaccines. If you have just received a vaccine, wait 14 days before getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

Speak with a health care provider first, if you:

- are pregnant, could be pregnant or are breastfeeding;
- have an auto-immune condition;
- have weakened immunity from illness or treatment (as you may have lower immune response to vaccine); or
- had an allergic reaction within four hours after receiving the first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

Do not take this vaccine without consulting with an allergist physician, if:

- you have known severe allergic reactions to any vaccine ingredients, including polysorbate; or
- you had a severe reaction to the first dose of any COVID-19 vaccine.

Continue to protect yourself and others

Until there are enough vaccines for everyone who wants to be vaccinated, it is important to continue physical distancing, wearing a mask, and staying home if you are sick. Health care workers and staff must wear personal protective equipment (PPE), even after vaccination.

For more information, talk to your health care provider or visit our website at toronto.ca/COVID19.

Resources

National Advisory Committee on Immunization. *Recommendations on the use of COVID-19 Vaccines*. March 3, 2021. Available at <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/national-advisory-committee-on-immunization-naci/recommendations-use-covid-19-vaccines.html>

AstraZeneca Canada. Mississauga, Ontario. February 26, 2021. *COVID-19 Vaccine product Monograph*. Available at <https://www.astrazeneca.ca/content/dam/az-ca/downloads/productinformation/az-covid-19-vaccine-product-monograph-en.pdf>