



## What people experiencing homelessness need to know about COVID-19 vaccines

### Why should I get vaccinated?



All COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. The vaccine will protect you from getting sick with COVID-19 including variants. Some people can get very ill from COVID-19, needing hospital care. By getting your COVID-19 vaccine you protect yourself and those around you. As more people get vaccinated, the community becomes safer. Then, as cases of COVID-19 decrease, some public health measures can be lifted and we can get back to more of the activities we enjoy.



### How do vaccines work?

The vaccine tells our body to make antibodies that protect us from getting sick if we are exposed to COVID-19. The vaccine does not have the virus, so you cannot catch COVID-19 by getting the vaccine.



### How long will I be protected if I am vaccinated?

At this time, we don't know how long the vaccine will protect you from COVID-19. If the protection goes down after vaccination, a booster dose may be provided.



### I have chronic health issues; can I get vaccinated?

All COVID-19 vaccines are safe for people with chronic health conditions such as chronic pain, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart and lung disease. If you are on medications that weaken your immune system, speak with your health care provider first.



### I have allergies; can I get vaccinated?

Allergies to the COVID-19 vaccines are rare. The vaccines are safe, even if you have food, drug or environmental allergies. People with allergies to any vaccine ingredient should speak to their health care provider first. You will always be observed for 15 minutes after getting the vaccine to watch for any reactions. A detailed list of ingredients in each vaccine is available at [toronto.ca/COVID19](https://toronto.ca/COVID19).



### If I had COVID-19, do I still need the vaccine?

Yes. Natural immunity from having COVID-19 may not last long. It is possible to get COVID-19 again. Anyone with COVID-19 symptoms should wait until they are feeling better, and not in self-isolation, before getting the vaccine.



## Will the vaccine make me sick?

The vaccine does not contain the virus so it cannot give you COVID-19. The vaccine may cause side effects similar to other vaccines (e.g. flu shot). Reactions usually last for only a few days. Look for:



- redness, pain or swelling where the injection was given
- headache, feeling tired, muscle aches, joint pain
- fever, chills, nausea, vomiting
- pain or swelling under the armpit or enlarged lymph nodes (less common)

Side effects are more common after the second dose. If you have reactions lasting more than a few days, talk to your health care provider. Public health keeps track of side effects to ensure the vaccines continue to be safe.

## Can I go back to normal life after vaccination?



You need to wait two weeks after complete vaccination for your body to build good immunity against COVID-19. We also need to wait until most people are vaccinated to get community protection. Therefore, you need to continue with current public health measures like wearing a mask, physical distancing, and staying home when you are sick until more people are vaccinated.

## Where do I go to get vaccinated?



Toronto's health sector, including Toronto Public Health, Ontario Health Teams and hospitals, pharmacies and primary care providers are working together closely to deliver vaccine to residents as quickly as possible. Some shelters and respite sites are offering on-site vaccinations, so ask staff about the next clinic where you are staying. Information about other places to get vaccinated, including City clinics, is available at [toronto.ca/COVID19](https://toronto.ca/COVID19).



## Have questions?

Speak with your health care provider or visit [toronto.ca/COVID19](https://toronto.ca/COVID19) for more information.