

October 10, 2023

## COVID-19 XBB.1.5 Vaccines

The [National Advisory on Immunization \(NACI\)](#) and [Ontario Ministry of Health](#) recommends a dose of the updated COVID-19 vaccine for fall 2023 when [eligible](#) for anyone six months and older.

Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna Spikevax are currently the two approved COVID-19 XBB vaccines in Canada. The updated COVID-19 vaccine can be given at the same time as the flu vaccine.

### How the Vaccine Works

The updated COVID-19 vaccine is safe and recommended for everyone six months of age and older, especially people at higher risk of getting very sick. It is an updated vaccine that targets the XBB strain of the Omicron variant to boost protection against severe COVID-19 and may be better against currently circulating variants.

The vaccines teach our immune system to make antibodies that protect us from COVID-19. The vaccines do not stay in the body for a long time, do not contain the COVID-19 virus and cannot give us COVID-19. It takes at least two weeks after getting the vaccine to be protected. Even if you recently had COVID-19, getting vaccinated gives [hybrid immunity](#) for stronger and longer-lasting protection

The vaccines are safe for people who are pregnant or breastfeeding, seniors, and anyone with a health condition, such as heart or lung problems, diabetes, high blood pressure, an auto-immune condition, or a weak immune system. People who are taking treatments or have a weak immune system should speak to a health care provider about when to get their booster for the best immune response.

### Vaccine Eligibility

All individuals ages six months of age and over are recommended to get the updated COVID-19 vaccine to start or complete their COVID-19 vaccination series.

### Vaccinated in the past:

- Children six months to four years of age who have completed their COVID-19 vaccination (primary) series and everyone five years and older can receive an updated COVID-19 vaccine at least six months since their last dose or infection.

- A shorter interval (three to six months) may be considered based on age and risk. Talk to your health care provider about the best option for you.
- Children six months to four years of age who have not completed their C19 vaccination (primary) series, can get their next dose(s) at eight weeks apart.
  - See [Vaccinated in the Past: Children Six Months to Four Years of Age](#) for more information on completing a primary series with the updated COVID-19 vaccine.

### Not vaccinated in the past:

- Six months to four-year-olds get:
  - Two doses of the updated Moderna vaccine at least eight weeks apart OR
  - Three doses of the updated Pfizer vaccine at least eight weeks apart
- Everyone five years of age and older get one dose of the updated COVID-19 vaccine

People with weakened immune systems and are considered [moderately to severely immunocompromised](#), are recommended to get **ONE additional dose** in their XBB schedule. It is important to speak with your health care provider about the timing for you to have the best immune response from the vaccine and minimize delays in your treatment.

Learn more about [vaccine eligibility](#) and /or see [vaccine use by age](#) for details on recommended dosage and intervals.

### Vaccine Ingredients and Allergies

The vaccines contain lipids (fats), salts, sugars and buffers. They do not contain egg, gelatin (pork), gluten, latex, preservatives, antibiotics, or aluminum. Allergies to the COVID-19 vaccines are rare. The vaccines are safe, even if you have food, drug or environmental allergies. Speak with a health care provider first if you are allergic to polyethylene glycol (PEG) or tromethamine (Tris).

Serious allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) are rare. Allergic reactions can be treated and are usually temporary. Get medical help if you have trouble breathing or have hives or swelling in the face and throat within four hours of getting the vaccine.

### Side Effects and Risks

Some people may have side effects after vaccination – most are mild to moderate, and last one to three days. Side effects usually mean that the vaccine is working.

**Common side effects include:**

- Redness, pain, itching or swelling where the needle was given
- Fever
- Headache
- Feeling tired
- Muscle aches
- Joint pain
- Chills
- Nausea and/or vomiting

If you have a serious reaction to the vaccine or the reaction does not go away after three days, contact a health care provider. Public health keeps track of side effects to ensure vaccine safety.

**Myocarditis and pericarditis:**

The risk of myocarditis/pericarditis (inflammation of the heart) is:

- Not common after a booster dose
- Not different between Moderna and Pfizer after an additional Covid-19 dose in adults.

**Stroke**

Currently, there is no risk of stroke in individuals who got either the Pfizer or Moderna XBB vaccines. Health Canada and Public Health Agency of Canada continue to monitor the safety of all COVID-19 vaccines approved in Canada to ensure the benefits outweigh their risk.

**Getting other vaccines at the same time**

COVID-19 vaccine can be given at the same time as most other vaccines (except for the RSV and [MPOX vaccine](#)).

**For more information:** Talk to a health care provider or visit [toronto.ca/COVID19](https://toronto.ca/COVID19).