

FAQ for patients

Patient questions answered about the COVID-19 vaccine in BC

With COVID-19 vaccines currently being administered in BC, many of you will have questions about the vaccine – who gets it and when; is it safe; is it effective and more.

We hope that the following information answers some of those questions, as we all wait for further news about how the vaccine will roll out across our province.

Who is getting the vaccine first?

- With very limited supplies, vaccinations are being directed to protect those most at risk – elderly residents, staff, and essential visitors of long term care and assisted living facilities, as well as health care providers working in ICUs, ERs and COVID medical wards.
- Please be patient and understanding as priority groups are vaccinated first.

How do I know when I can be vaccinated?

- Every effort is being made to inform people when it's their turn for vaccination as details become available.
- The latest information on timing and vaccine delivery can be found at the BCCDC website [here](#).

I'm not from a high-risk group. When can I get vaccinated?

- Based on the projections of the Provincial Health officer, it is anticipated that the general population will start to get the vaccine mid-2021, and it may take towards the end of the year for everyone to be vaccinated.

Why will it take so long for everyone to get vaccinated?

- Vaccination delivery is a complex undertaking.
- Limited supplies, vaccine storage (sub-zero temperatures), and the two-dose regimen, all need to be considered when planning the roll-out of the vaccine across the province.
- In the meantime, we ask that British Columbians remain patient, and continue to take measures to reduce the spread of the virus as they wait their turn for the vaccine.

Who should NOT get the vaccine?

- The vaccine will **not** be routinely offered to people under 16, or those who are immunosuppressed, have an autoimmune disease, or are pregnant or breastfeeding, until further evidence is available.
- If people in these groups are at high risk for COVID-19 exposure, consultation with a health care provider is recommended to assess risk versus benefit of receiving the vaccine.
- People who have had a severe allergic reaction to any vaccine or are allergic to any [ingredients in the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine](#) should also not receive the vaccine at this time.
- Further guidance for these groups will be available soon.

Is the vaccine safe?

- The vaccines are safe – regulators set the bar high to ensure the most rigorous standards are met.
- Vaccine trials also included older people and those from different ethnic backgrounds.
- It should be recognized that risks of the virus are significant, and far outweigh the possibility of serious side effects from the vaccination.

How successful are the vaccines in protecting people from the virus?

- Success of the vaccines is 94 to 95% effective with a second dose, which means they can protect most people.

How many doses will I need and when will it start to work?

- People will need two doses – the second one will follow the first dose by a *minimum* of 21 days.
- During this time, it will be important to continue to wear a mask when you're out, stay six feet from others, limit contact to those living in your household, and wash your hands frequently.

How long will I be protected for?

- As time goes on, we will be learning more about the virus and our immune responses i.e., how long it takes for immunity to be achieved, whether we can still transmit COVID-19, and how long we are protected from getting the virus.

Where can I get the vaccine?

- Those details will become available. Planning is underway to determine how best to safely provide the vaccine in our communities.