

# COVID-19 VACCINES & YOU

## *Your Guide to Vaccination for Youth Aged 12-17*



### WHY VACCINATE?

Vaccines are a safe and effective way to protect yourself, your child, and your family from COVID-19. They are an important tool to help stop the spread of COVID-19 and help students and their families safely resume normal activities.

This guide will help you and your 12 to 17 year old decide if COVID-19 vaccination is right for them.

Learn more about  
COVID-19 vaccines for  
youth aged 12-17

[covid-19.ontario.ca](https://covid-19.ontario.ca)  
[covid-19-vaccines-youth](https://covid-19-vaccines-youth)

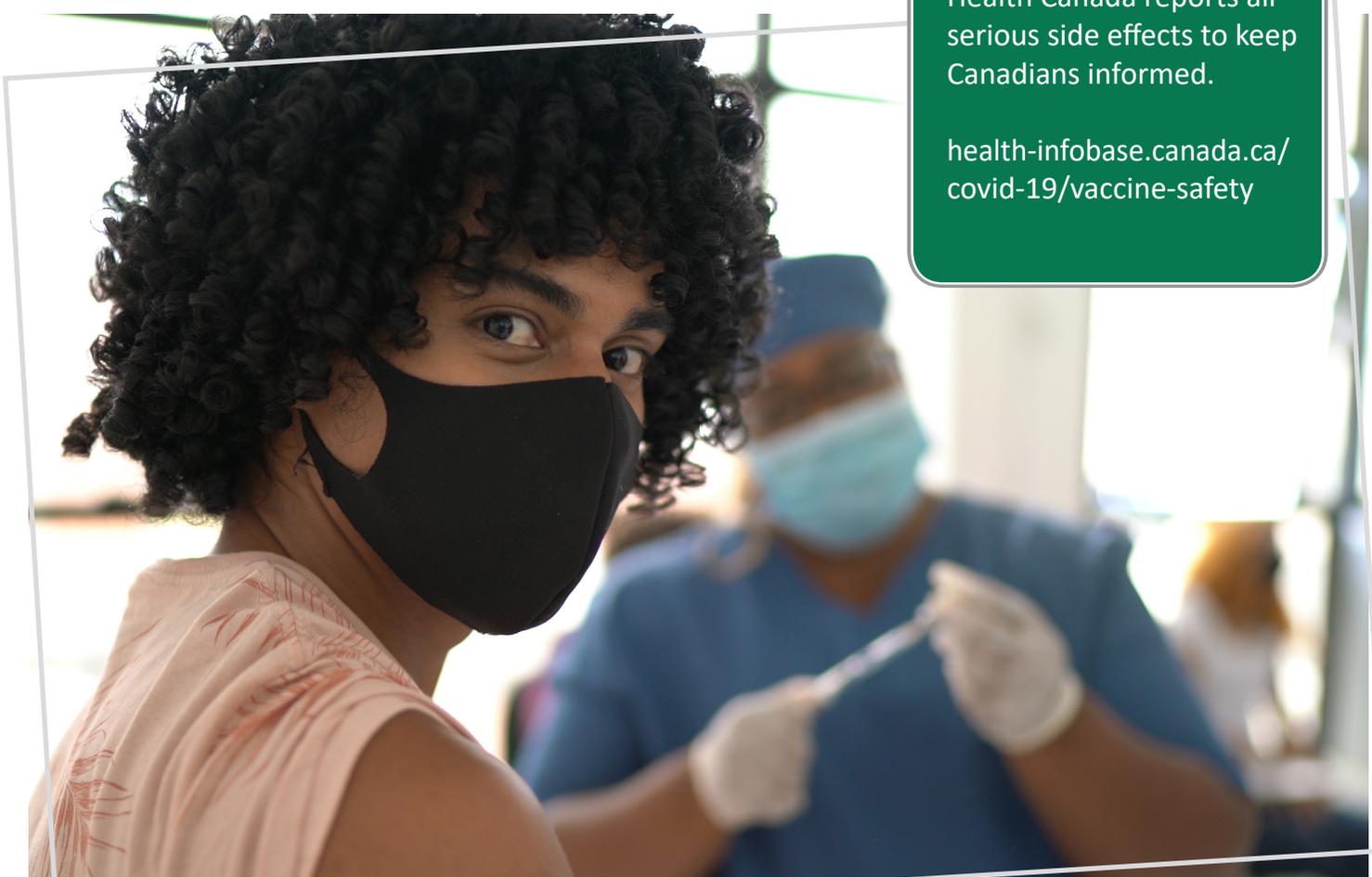
# APPROVAL AND SAFETY PROCESS

All vaccines in Canada are heavily regulated by Health Canada. As a result, it is illegal to sell or market a vaccine that has not completed all required stages of research and trials. International cooperation on COVID-19 vaccines has allowed countries to compare trial results from around the world and ensure safety in a relatively short period of time. Visit [covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccine-safety](https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccine-safety) for details.

## Serious Side Effects Are Rare

While COVID-19 vaccines are new, serious side effects are rare. In Canada, side effects are reported by Health Canada to keep people informed.

The risk of anaphylaxis (a life-threatening allergic reaction) – is low in people who do not already have an allergy to the vaccine’s ingredients.



Health Canada reports all serious side effects to keep Canadians informed.

[health-infobase.canada.ca/  
covid-19/vaccine-safety](https://health-infobase.canada.ca/covid-19/vaccine-safety)

# SIDE EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 VACCINE

## What's Common?

Not everyone will experience side effects, and most side effects are minor or not long-lasting.

Examples include:

- Pain, redness, or swelling at your injection site
- Tiredness
- Headache
- Muscle or joint pain
- Chills or fever

Use a cool damp cloth to reduce soreness, and use pain or fever medication if needed. These minor side effects are actually a great sign that the vaccine is working and your body is having an immune response.

## What's Concerning?

Serious side effects are rare. If you experience any of these symptoms, seek medical attention right away or call 9-1-1:

- Hives (bumps that are very itchy)
- Swelling of the face, tongue, or throat
- Difficulty breathing, or chest pain
- Very high fever (+40°C)
- Blurred vision, or severe/worsening headache
- Swelling or coldness in arms or legs
- Multiple small bruises or red/purple spots on skin

If you experience any serious side effects, seek medical attention right away or call 9-1-1

## Allergies to Consider

If you have a history of allergies to ingredients found in the COVID-19 vaccine, such as PEG (polyethylene glycol) or Polysorbate, speak to your primary care provider or doctor before getting vaccinated.

As well, if you have had a bad reaction or anaphylaxis to anything in the past – including food or other allergens – tell your vaccinator. They will require you to recover for 30 minutes after your vaccination to make sure you do not have a reaction.

## CHECKING THE FACTS VS. FICTION

There is a lot of information online about vaccination. Not all websites or social media pages are factual. You are encouraged to refer to credible sources to help inform your decision to be vaccinated.

Health Canada, the Middlesex-London Health Unit, your primary care provider, and Public Health Ontario are all resources you can trust.

You may have questions about what is true and what is not. The following are credible answers to common questions and misconceptions.

Health Canada, the Middlesex-London Health Unit, your primary care provider, and Public Health Ontario are all credible sources you can trust for COVID-19 vaccine information.



# CHECKING THE FACTS VS. FICTION

## Is the COVID-19 vaccine mandatory?

No. While vaccinations against COVID-19 are strongly recommended, it is always your choice to be vaccinated.

## Will vaccinations end the pandemic?

COVID-19 may be with us for a while. Vaccinations are intended to prevent people from having serious complications from a COVID-19 infection and help recover from this global pandemic sooner. Youth aged 12-17 are in an exciting stage of life – learning, making life-long friends, attending prom, travelling, playing sports, and preparing to enter the workforce. Vaccination is one choice you can make to ensure you don't miss out on these important milestones!

## Can I get vaccinated if I already had COVID-19?

Yes, and you should! Getting vaccinated will help protect you from getting sick again. If you are currently recovering from COVID-19, you should wait to get your vaccine until you have no symptoms and are no longer self-isolating.

## Who can give consent for vaccination?

Anyone getting a COVID-19 vaccine, including youth aged 12-17, must give informed consent, meaning they understand what the vaccine involves, why it is recommended, and the risks and benefits of getting it or not getting it. Youth can talk to a parent or another adult they trust before getting vaccinated. If someone is unable to provide informed consent for medical reasons, they will need consent from someone who can make a decision on their behalf, such as a parent or legal guardian.

## Can I skip my second dose?

One dose provides a good level of protection against COVID-19, but you are not fully vaccinated until you have completed both doses.

## Does the COVID-19 vaccine affect reproduction?

No, there is no evidence that any of the COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in Canada have an effect on reproduction or fertility.

# CHECKING THE FACTS VS. FICTION

## Will I be tracked if I am vaccinated?

Anyone who has had a medical procedure or vaccination in Ontario has a medical record. This is used for the purposes of giving advice, diagnoses, and treatments that are based on your medical history. Your medical history is private, and legally protected by the Ontario Health Protection and Promotion Act. No one is ever allowed to access your medical history for tracking purposes. The vaccine itself does not include any tracking technology or embed any tracking devices into a person.

## Do young people even need to be vaccinated?

Yes, it is recommended that you get vaccinated. Research shows that people infected by COVID-19 are at-risk of long-term side effects from an infection – even if the infection itself was mild. Common lingering side effects of a COVID-19 infection include breathing problems from scar tissue in the lungs, ongoing muscle pains and headaches, organ damage to the heart and brain, memory loss, blood clots, mood disorders, and more. What's more, variants of concern have been shown to have a more serious effect on youth than the original strain of COVID-19. As of May 22, more than 93,000 teens aged 12-17 in Ontario have been vaccinated against COVID-19.



## Does the COVID-19 vaccine protect people around me from getting sick?

No one is certain. However, the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is expected to be up to 95% effective after two doses and showed robust antibody response in youth ages 12 to 17. Protecting yourself means fewer cases of COVID-19, fewer hospitalizations, and fewer deaths.

## Can I see my friends and extended family after my vaccination?

Not right away. After you are vaccinated, continue to follow public health measures, such as wearing a face covering, staying 6 feet away from others, and limiting social gatherings with people you do not live with. What's most important is how many in our community, province, and country are vaccinated.

# ON THE DAY OF YOUR APPOINTMENT

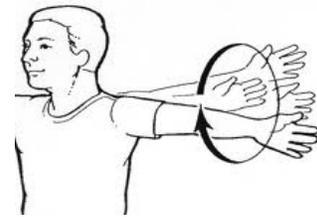
## Before your vaccination...

- If you take medication regularly, continue to do so.
- Make sure you eat before you go to your vaccine appointment and pack a snack for afterwards.
- Wear a t-shirt or a shirt with sleeves that roll up easily.
- Arrive no earlier than 10 minutes before your appointment.
- Inform the vaccinator if you are nervous about needles or have a history of fainting during medical procedures.
- Stay home if you are sick and call to reschedule the appointment.

## After your vaccination...

### At the site of the injection on your arm:

- Apply a clean, wet, cool wash cloth over the area
- Move or exercise your arm



### If you develop a fever:

- Drink plenty of water
- Dress in light clothes



## Continue to follow public health guidance



Wear a mask



Maintain 2 metres/  
6 feet physical  
distance from others



Avoid contact with  
those who aren't part  
of your household



Avoid having visitors  
in your home