

COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Program Frequently Asked Questions

The COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Program allows for the administration of COVID-19 vaccines in primary care, hospital, long-term care and retirement home settings. Expanding the type of healthcare settings administering COVID-19 vaccines provides residents of Middlesex-London with convenient options to ask questions and receive the vaccine from a healthcare professional.

Why should I participate in this program?

Healthcare providers play an instrumental role in supporting vaccine uptake. For many people, having a personal conversation about a vaccine with their healthcare provider is key to getting vaccinated. By participating in this program, your organization can provide an important service for your patients/residents and help to prevent the spread of illness in the community.

What makes administering COVID-19 vaccines different from administering other vaccines?

Processes for providing the COVID-19 vaccine at your organization differs from those for other vaccines, such as the seasonal influenza vaccine. The difference include:

- The provincial requirement for all COVID-19 vaccinations to be documented in the COVax database.
- The storage and handling requirements for COVID-19 vaccines.

How will I be supported in delivering COVID-19 vaccines?

The Middlesex-London Health Unit's (MLHU) COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Program will support your organization in providing COVID-19 vaccines to your patients/residents. MLHU has recently made improvements to the program to make it easier for organizations to participate. These improvements include:

- A streamlined and condensed training process (1hr/staff member).
- Informatics support to help navigate COVax.
- Reduced inventory reporting.
- Efficient ordering using our new Vaccine Ordering App.
- Access to public health nurses to answer your vaccine related questions.

I heard I need to sign a contract. Is that true?

Participating organizations are required to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which acts as an agreement between your organization and the MLHU.

- The MLHU has a contract with the provincial government and is accountable for all COVID-19 vaccine in the region.
- The MLHU is required to have signed contracts with all organizations receiving and administering the vaccine in the Middlesex-London region.
- The MOU outlines an organization's responsibilities including the required and acceptable use of the COVax software and the proper vaccine storage and handling requirements.

Why do I have to use specific software to document COVID-19 vaccinations?

The provincial government has developed software for the COVID-19 vaccination response called COVax. All COVID-19 vaccinations across the province must be documented using this software. This ensures accurate surveillance of vaccine coverage rates. The COVax system may become more widely used for more vaccines in the future, making this an excellent opportunity to become familiar with the system.

How do I learn how to use this software?

Learning the COVax software is a key part of the training offered by the MLHU. Based on partner feedback, the MLHU has improved the training to include:

- A step-by step user guide.
- Informatics support for navigating COVax.

How long does the training take?

Each staff member that will be using the COVax software is required to complete training, which will take approximately one hour. A COVax user account will only be created after the training is complete.

What COVID-19 vaccines can I order?

The COVID-19 vaccines that are authorized for use in Canada can be found on the MLHU's COVID-19 Vaccine [webpage](#). Vaccine availability will depend on federal and provincial inventory and may fluctuate. Check the Public Health Ordering System (PHOS) to see which vaccines are currently available for ordering.

How do I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

After an organization has signed their MOU and staff have completed training, the organization can order COVID-19 vaccines using MLHU's [Public Health Ordering System \(PHOS\)](#). Organizations are

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responsible for picking up vaccines at the MLHU Citi Plaza site. For more information regarding ordering, please visit the MLHU's Immunization Information for Healthcare Providers [webpage](#).

How will I know all the different vaccine requirements?

The MLHU will make information regarding storage and handling available to organizations when they receive COVID-19 vaccines. Storage and handling information is also available in the vaccine product monographs, which can be found on the MLHU's COVID-19 Vaccine [webpage](#). If you need additional information, our public health nurses are available by phone to support you with any of your vaccine-related questions.

How easy are the COVID-19 vaccines to work with?

The key difference between COVID-19 vaccines and other vaccines is the fragile nature of the mRNA vaccines. The COVID-19 vaccines require caution when handling to ensure that the mRNA is not damaged. Always handle gently and do not drop or shake the vaccines.

Administration of the vaccine itself is the easy part! COVID-19 vaccines are administered as intramuscular injections in the deltoid muscle (just like an influenza vaccine).

I cannot hold a vaccine clinic due to limited space. Can I vaccinate individual patients?

Yes! Here are some of the options for organization to vaccinate individual patients:

- Group a series of individual appointments for vaccinating patients.
 - COVID-19 vaccine products come in multidose vials. Each product will have a limited time for use after the first puncture. For more information, see the product monographs on the MLHU's COVID-19 Vaccine [webpage](#).
- It has also been deemed acceptable to waste small amounts of vaccine if that means increasing vaccination coverage in our community. This is particularly important for your patients who may not seek vaccination otherwise. Therefore, you may order a full vial of vaccine to vaccinate just one patient if necessary. In optimal circumstances, you will have enough patients arranged to use a full vial within the period of expiry.
 - Any vaccine that is wasted needs to be documented as wastage in COVax (same day as the rest of the vial was administered) and physically disposed of following normal procedures for biomedical waste.

If you have any additional questions, please email COVIDVaccine.Informatics@mlhu.on.ca.

If you are interested in joining the COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Program, please visit the program [webpage](#).