

## Information Sheet

# Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 Vaccines

This information sheet provides basic information only. It is not intended to provide or take the place of medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Please read this information sheet carefully and ensure all your questions have been answered before receiving the vaccine.

### What is COVID-19?

- COVID-19 is an infection caused by a new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). COVID-19 is mainly passed from an infected person to others when the infected person coughs, sneezes, sings, talks, or breathes.
- Symptoms of COVID-19 can include cough, shortness of breath, fever, chills, tiredness, and loss of smell or taste. Some people infected with the virus have no symptoms at all, while others have symptoms that range from mild to severe.

### How do the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines protect against COVID-19?

- All vaccines present our body with something that looks like the infection so that our immune system can learn how to produce natural protection. This prevents us from becoming sick if we come into contact with the real virus in the future.
- Both COVID-19 vaccines use instructions called mRNA to generate a coronavirus protein that initiates the body's natural immune response so it can recognize and fight off the virus. mRNA vaccines are not live vaccines and do not contain the virus, therefore you cannot get COVID-19 disease from the vaccine.
- For more information about each vaccine and their ingredients please consult the [Pfizer-BioNTech](#) and [Moderna](#) product monographs.
- More information on mRNA vaccines can be found on [Public Health Ontario's \(PHO\) COVID-19 Vaccines](#) webpage

### Are COVID-19 vaccines effective?

- In large studies where individuals were given 2 doses of the vaccine, the immunized group of people were about 95% less likely to become sick with COVID-19 compared to the group that did not receive the vaccine.

### Who should not receive the vaccine?

- Individuals with current confirmed or suspected SARS-CoV-2 infection, or those with current COVID-19 symptoms. Individuals with previous confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection may receive the vaccine once they are past their infection period.
- Individuals who have received another vaccine (not a COVID-19 vaccine) in the last 14 days
- Individuals who have ever had a severe allergic reaction (i.e. anaphylaxis) to a previous dose of an mRNA vaccine or to any of its components (including polyethylene glycol (PEG) and/or polysorbate) or its container
- Individuals who do not fit the current eligibility for the vaccine
- Individuals who are not in the authorized age group
  - Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is authorized for individuals who are 12 years of age and older
  - Moderna vaccine is authorized for individuals who are 18 years of age and older

### Considerations for other individuals:

- Breastfeeding or pregnant individuals, individuals with non-vaccine related allergies, individuals with autoimmune conditions, or individuals who are immunocompromised due to disease or treatment may receive the vaccine if they have discussed risks and benefits with their primary health care provider and/or health care specialist.
- For more detailed recommendations please consult the [Vaccination information for Special Populations](#)

### How is the vaccine administered?

- The vaccine is given as a needle in the upper arm (into the deltoid muscle)
- The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and the Moderna vaccine require two doses

### What are the side effects of the vaccine?

- Ongoing studies on the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines indicate no serious side effects to date.
- As with other vaccines, some individuals develop mild side effects that are generally not serious and go away on their own. Common side effects include pain/redness/swelling where the needle was given, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, joint pain, chills, mild fever, and/or swollen glands. These side effects are expected following immunization because they indicate the vaccine is working to produce protection.
- As with any medicines and vaccines, allergic reactions are rare but can occur. Symptoms of an allergic reaction include hives, swelling of your face/tongue/throat, or difficulty breathing. If you are concerned about any reactions you experience after receiving the vaccine, contact your healthcare provider or call 911 if you are feeling severely unwell. You can also contact the [Middlesex London Health Unit](#) to ask questions or to report an adverse reaction.

Adapted from the Ontario Ministry of Health COVID-19 Information Sheet  
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