

## **COVID-19 Vaccine Information**

### **Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty® and Moderna Spikevax®**

This sheet provides basic information only; it is not intended to take the place of medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Read this information carefully to ensure your questions have been answered before receiving the vaccine.

#### **What is COVID-19?**

- COVID-19 is an infection caused by a coronavirus, in this case SARS-CoV-2. It is passed from an infected person to others through coughing, sneezing, singing, talking, and breathing.
- Some people with COVID-19 virus experience no symptoms, while others develop symptoms that range from mild to severe, including cough, shortness of breath, fever, chills, tiredness, and loss of smell or taste.

#### **How do Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty® and Moderna Spikevax® vaccines protect against COVID-19?**

- Vaccines introduce something that looks like the virus into the body, so that the immune system can learn how to produce natural protection against it.
- Both COVID-19 vaccines use mRNA to tell the body to make a coronavirus protein. This starts the body's natural immune response, so it can recognize and fight off the virus if and when our body comes in contact with it.
- It's important to remember that mRNA vaccines do not contain the live virus and cannot give you the infection.

#### **Is the COVID-19 vaccine effective?**

- Both COVID-19 vaccines are effective (94-95%) at protecting against symptomatic, lab-confirmed COVID-19 after all recommended doses of vaccine are received.
- Additional research is being done to determine how long protection lasts and whether our being vaccinated will prevent others around us from getting sick.

#### **Who is the COVID-19 vaccine for?**

- Individuals must be a certain age to receive the vaccine:
  - Visit the Middlesex-London Health Unit's website on the most up to date age eligibility information: <https://www.healthunit.com/covid-19-vaccine>
- Individuals who are in good health as well as those who are at a higher risk for severe COVID-19 outcomes are encouraged to get the vaccine. The vaccine is safe for anyone who:
  - is pregnant or breastfeeding;

has an autoimmune disorder or is immunocompromised due to disease or therapy (individuals should talk to their healthcare provider about the timing of when they should receive vaccines.) Individuals who are 12 years of age and older can receive the COVID-19 vaccine at any time without delay (including the same day as another non-COVID-19 vaccine).

Please note that anyone who is five to 11 years of age, who has recently received or requires a non-COVID-19 vaccine (i.e. influenza vaccine), should check the current guidelines for any spacing requirements between vaccine doses.

**Some individuals should delay receiving the vaccine, and not attend a clinic, including:**

- Those who currently have a confirmed or suspected SARS-CoV-2 infection and have been advised to isolate.
- Those with COVID-19 symptoms, who should follow current public health guidance, including completing an isolation period.
- Those diagnosed with myocarditis or pericarditis after receiving a previous dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine. should speak to their healthcare provider prior to receiving another dose.

**Information for individuals who have known allergies:**

- Those who have allergies not related to the ingredients of the COVID-19 vaccines, other vaccines and/or injectable medications can be vaccinated safely.
- Those who experienced an immediate allergic reaction after a previous dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine, non-COVID-19 vaccines, other injectable therapies or who have a severe allergy to any component of the vaccines should speak with an allergist-immunologist about their options, if any, for receiving a COVID-19 vaccine. Your primary health care provider can connect you with an allergist-immunologist if needed.

**How is the COVID-19 vaccine given?**

- The vaccine is given by needle and injected into the muscle of the upper arm (deltoid).

**How many doses of COVID-19 vaccine are needed?**

- Two doses of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine are recommended. The interval between when the vaccine doses are administered varies based on the specific vaccine.
- Booster doses are now available for specific populations. Eligibility for additional doses beyond the first series of vaccine is set by the Ministry of Health. Please visit <https://www.healthunit.com/covid-19-vaccine> for current criteria and recommendations.

**What are the side effects of the COVID-19 vaccines?**

- Studies involving the COVID-19 vaccines have shown that serious side effects are very rare.
- As with all vaccines and medications, individuals may develop side effects. Side effects following vaccination are often an indication that the body is working to build protection against a virus. Side effects associated with the COVID-19 vaccine are mostly mild and go away on their own. Common side effects include pain, redness, and/or swelling where the needle was given, tiredness, headache, muscle and joint pain, chills, mild fever, and/or swollen glands.
- There have, however, been a very small number of reports of myocarditis and pericarditis (inflammation in different parts of the heart) after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. Most cases have occurred within one week of vaccination, have been mild and have resolved quickly.
- Serious allergic reactions are rare but can occur. Clinic staff are prepared to manage a severe allergic reaction at all clinic sites.
- Individuals will receive more information about possible side effects at the time of vaccination; as well as when, and where, to access help should it be needed.

For more information and resources, visit <https://www.healthunit.com/covid-19-vaccine>.