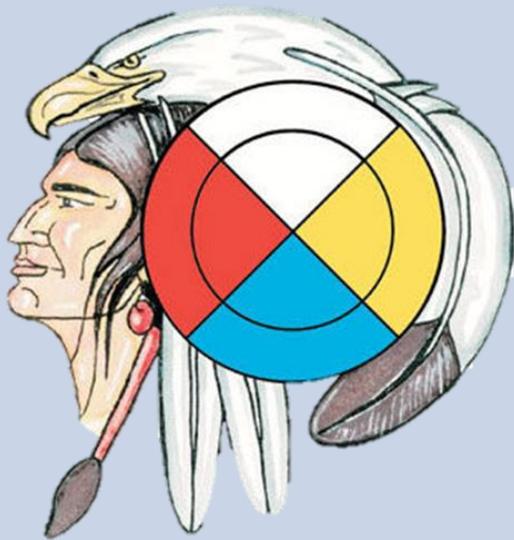


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COVID 19 Vaccine Q&A



*Kenora Chiefs Advisory
Waasegiizhig Nanaandawe'iyewigamig Health
Access Centre*

What is the COVID-19 vaccine?

- Vaccines are products that produce immunity to a specific disease like COVID-19. When you are immune to COVID-19 that means you may be exposed to it without becoming sick or if you do become infected, it can prevent more severe illness.

Why is it important to get a COVID-19 vaccination?

- Vaccines save lives. Vaccines don't just protect the people getting vaccinated; they can protect everyone around them too. The more people in a community who are vaccinated and therefore protected from COVID-19, the harder it is for it to spread.
- Widespread immunization is the best option to protect people from COVID-19.
- As more people get vaccinated, we will be able to return to activities that haven't been possible during the pandemic.

How does the vaccine work?

- The first COVID-19 vaccines are called messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines. RNA stands for ribonucleic acid, which is a molecule that provides cells with instructions for making proteins. These vaccines essentially teach our cells how to make copies of the coronavirus' spike protein that are harmless to us (do not cause disease), which triggers an immune response if we become infected with the virus.
- The Pfizer and Moderna mRNA vaccines require two doses to be fully effective. The second dose is administered between 21 and 42 days after the first.
- The vaccines are about 70 per cent effective 14 days after the first dose and 95 per cent effective after the second dose.
- As with any vaccine, the COVID-19 vaccines may not fully protect all those who receive them.
- Questions remain about how long immunity lasts and whether a vaccinated person can still transmit the disease. The research into these and other questions continues, and will continue to go on as the vaccine is being administered.

How many COVID-19 Vaccines are there?

- Currently as of today, there are two COVID-19 Vaccines authorized for use in Canada:
- As of December 9th, 2020, the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine has been approved for use in Canada.
- As of December 23rd, 2020, the Moderna vaccine has been approved for use in Canada.
- Supply of these vaccines continue to increase in the coming weeks, allowing for more people to receive them.

I've heard that people may not be getting the second dose of the vaccine as scheduled. Will it still work?

- The World Health Organization (WHO) Advisory Group on Immunizations allows for the second dose to be given up to six weeks (42 days) after the first dose in countries or areas where there is a high rate of transmission and limited vaccine supply. This is to allow as many people as possible to benefit from a first dose.
- The strength of the immune response and long-term effectiveness of the vaccine is not expected to be decreased by this delay. If an individual's second dose is delayed more than 42 days after their first dose, it is recommended they receive their second dose as soon as possible and no doses will need to be repeated.

Is the COVID-19 vaccination safe? Should I be worried?

- Vaccines are safe. To ensure vaccines are safe, there are many processes and standards in place. The COVID-19 vaccine has been thoroughly tested.
- In Canada, new vaccines must go through three phases of clinical trials (studies) before being approved for use in the general public. There are hundreds or even thousands of participants who volunteer to take part in the third phase of the clinical trials. These trials provide crucial information on vaccine safety as well as effectiveness. After clinical trials, Health Canada must review the evidence and approve any vaccine before it is used in Canada.
- Before a vaccine is offered in Canada, Health Canada will ensure: It's safe, it works, there are consistent, high-quality manufacturing processes, and that the benefits of getting the vaccine outweigh the risks of not getting it. There is strong evidence that the vaccine is safe and works for people 18 years and over—including seniors—and that it is highly effective across age, sex, race and ethnicity.

What are the side effects of COVID-19 vaccines?

- Only minor side effects were observed in clinical trials, similar to ones you might get from any shots. These include pain at injection site, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain and fever. These reactions are mild and generally last one to two days. They are evidence that your immune system is working to respond to the vaccine.
- Should you develop any serious symptoms or symptoms that could be an allergic reaction, seek medical attention right away. Symptoms of an allergic reaction include: hives (bumps on the skin that are often very itchy); swelling of the face, tongue or throat; and difficulty breathing. This is why you are asked to wait 15 minutes before you leave the clinic after getting a vaccination.

Is the vaccine safe for me to get if I have an underlying health condition?

- The vaccine is generally recommended for people with underlying health conditions, such as diabetes, asthma and/or heart disease, however it is strongly recommended you contact your doctor for consultation on this. This is because most people with underlying health conditions are vulnerable to developing a severe illness if they do get COVID-19, and vaccines are the most effective way to prevent that from happening.

- However, COVID-19 vaccines have not yet been tested in people who take medications to suppress the immune system or have some immune-compromising conditions (e.g., autoimmune diseases or people undergoing chemotherapy). Therefore, a conversation with your care provider and or specialist is recommended to review the risks and benefits of the vaccine. Speak with your health care provider if you are unsure whether the vaccine is right for you.

Is it safe for me to get the vaccine if I have allergies?

- Health Canada recommends that people with allergies to any of the ingredients in the vaccines should not receive them. An ingredient in the vaccines that has been associated with a rare but serious allergy (anaphylaxis) is polyethylene glycol (PEG). PEG can be found in some cosmetics, skin care products, laxatives, some processed foods and drinks, and other products. Learn more about the ingredients and recommendations from Health Canada.
- If you have experienced a serious allergic reaction to another vaccine, drug or food, or skin care product you should talk to your health professional before you receive the vaccine.
- The Moderna vaccine ingredients are published here:
<https://www.canada.ca/en/healthcanada/services/drugs-health-products/covid19-industry/drugs-vaccines-treatments/vaccines/moderna.html#a11>
- The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine ingredients are published here:
<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/covid19-industry/drugs-vaccines-treatments/vaccines/pfizer-biontech.html#a1.1>
- Vaccines continue to be monitored for safety after they are approved. They are monitored locally, provincially, nationally and globally. If you have an adverse reaction following immunization, it is important you let your immunization provider know.

Should I get vaccinated for COVID-19 if I'm pregnant or breastfeeding?

- COVID-19 vaccines have not yet been tested widely in people who are pregnant or breastfeeding. However, most pregnant and breastfeeding women would benefit from receiving the vaccine, as the risk of not getting vaccinated may outweigh the potential risk of being vaccinated during pregnancy.
- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, please connect with your health care provider about whether the vaccine is right for you at this time.

Should I get the vaccine if I have tested positive for COVID-19 or already had COVID-19?

- Yes, if you had, or may have had, COVID-19 you should still get the vaccine when it's available to you. This is because you may not be immune to the virus that causes COVID-19 and you could get infected again and become sick. If you are unsure, check with your health care provider.
- If you recently tested positive and currently have COVID-19, you should wait three months until after the testing date to get your vaccine.

How long will the COVID-19 vaccine protect me?

- This vaccine has not been around long enough to know how long the protection will last. Clinical studies continue to measure the effectiveness over time for this vaccine. Health Canada and other immunization experts will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the vaccines.

I still feel nervous about getting the vaccine... (and more questions about vaccine hesitancy)

- Vaccination is a personal choice that most Canadians agree is part of good health and important for prevention of serious disease. However, if you decide right now you are not ready to get the COVID-19 vaccine, that **does not** mean you cannot receive the vaccine in future.
- Feeling worried or hesitant is normal when something is new and it is understandable that some people – especially Indigenous people – may lack trust in the medical system. However, vaccine trials go through rigorous, well-established ethical processes. We can feel assured that vaccines are safe, effective and that they will save lives.
- Reduced access to stable housing, income, clean water and/or health and social services place many Indigenous peoples at higher risk of COVID-19. The COVID-19 vaccine is one way that Indigenous peoples can protect themselves from this virus and build immunity.

How did we get a COVID-19 vaccine so fast?

- Scientists have been able to develop COVID-19 vaccines quickly thanks to high levels of government funding, sharing information and working together across countries, and building on technology they already use in existing, successful vaccines.
- In addition, groups like Health Canada shortened the bureaucratic processes, for example, by reviewing data while clinical processes were going on. However, the safety approval processes have not changed. The requirements for safety data in clinical trials are as stringent as ever.

What is Ontario's Vaccine Roll Out Plan?

- The Premier has convened a COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force to ensure the fair and equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccine across the province. Based on recommendations from this Task Force along with those from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) Ontario recommends a complete series of COVID-19 vaccine for all individuals in the authorized age group without contraindications to the vaccine.
- As COVID-19 vaccine supply is limited in the early phases, the following populations should be prioritized for vaccinations according to the authorized immunization schedule (with efforts to ensure completion of the immunization schedule with the same vaccine). More key populations will be announced as more vaccine supply becomes available.
- On December 7, 2020, the province announced the key populations that will be first to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, namely:
 - Residents, employees and staff, and essential caregivers of congregate living settings that provide care for seniors
 - Health care workers (including all those who work in health care settings and those in direct contact with patients)

- Adults in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit populations where infection can have disproportionate consequences, including those living in remote or isolated areas
- Adult recipients of chronic home health care

How do I know if my community is ready for the roll out?

- Kenora Chiefs Advisory has developed a KCA Vaccine Task Force. As a part of the communications group on this task force a community readiness checklist was sent out to the Health Directors and Leadership in your community. They can work directly with the KCA task force, as well as the province of Ontario to ensure all qualifications are met.

How are the vaccines being distributed?

- The first vaccine, by Pfizer-BioNTech, is being transported into the province to predetermined “drop sites” (In most cases in Ontario and as well in the Kenora region, this will be to the local health unit) The main requirement for this vaccine is to have the ultra-cold (less than minus 70 degrees) freezer. Due to manufacturing expansion as of January 25th 2021 the Pfizer arrival date in Canada has been pushed back by a few weeks.

- Moderna and the other upcoming vaccines have less strict storage requirements and are much easier to transport and store in various locations. The requirement for this vaccine is a -30 freezer.

What actions are being taken to provide public education in not only English, but the language?

- The KCA Vaccine Task Force is putting a huge priority on public education tools and community resources that not only are in English, but are in the language so we can reach all community members. As mentioned above this is a personal choice, and members having the proper information is vital in that choice. KCA is currently setting up an Anishinaabemowen help line, so members who feel more comfortable speaking in their language to receive information can do so.

- As well the communications lead for the Task Force also sits on the Ontario Communications Task Force and work is being done to have infographics and fact sheets translated.