

COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is an infection of the airways and lungs that can be very **serious**, especially for people who are over 50 or who have other chronic health conditions such as the following:

- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- Lung disease
- Kidney disease

COVID-19 can also be more serious if you **smoke or used to smoke**.

Symptoms of COVID-19 can include a cough, shortness of breath, fever, chills, tiredness and the loss of smell or taste. Some people with COVID-19 may have no symptoms or only mild symptoms. Others may need to go to the hospital and may even die.

How is COVID-19 spread?

The virus that causes COVID-19 is spread from person to person by coughing, sneezing, talking and singing. It can also be spread by touching an object or surface with the virus on it and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

What is the COVID-19 vaccine?

There are two types of COVID-19 vaccines being used in B.C.: mRNA vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna) and viral vector vaccines (AstraZeneca). Both help your body make antibodies that will help protect you from getting seriously ill if you are exposed to COVID-19.

If you have questions about how the vaccines differ, talk to a member of your health care team.

Can I still get COVID-19 if I get the vaccine?

Right now, vaccines are the best way to protect you against COVID-19. It's important to remember the following:

- No vaccine is 100 per cent effective, so even if you get the vaccine, there is a small chance you could still get COVID-19.
- After a dose of the vaccine, it will take about two weeks for your body to build protection from the virus.
- If you are exposed to someone with COVID-19 during those two weeks or shortly before getting the vaccine, you could still get COVID-19.

Do I still need to wear a mask, distance and use hand sanitizer if I get the vaccine?

Yes. After you get the vaccine, continue to follow the same public health recommendations you're following now:

- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer
- Physically distance
- Wear a mask if you use transit or enter a public building while you're on a pass

What will I get for my second dose?

For the most part, if you got the Pfizer mRNA vaccine for your first dose, you will get Pfizer again for your second dose. If you got the Moderna mRNA vaccine for your first dose, you may get either Moderna or Pfizer for your second dose. The Pfizer and Moderna mRNA vaccines are safe to mix.

If you received the AstraZeneca vaccine for your first dose, you can pick AstraZeneca, Pfizer or Moderna, depending on what is available, for your second dose. There are no safety concerns with getting a Pfizer or Moderna vaccine as your second dose.

You are likely to experience milder side effects if your second dose is the same type of vaccine as the first dose. If you have questions, please talk to a member of your health care team.

How do I know what vaccine I got the first time around?

You don't need to remember what kind of vaccine you got, or when. Your vaccinations are being tracked for you.

What if I complete the program before I get my second dose of the vaccine?

If you complete the program before your second dose of the vaccine, you will get your second dose in your home community. Our health care staff can help you register online for your second dose before you leave the program, if you would like.

Can everyone get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes, except for a very small number of people who have allergies. If you have serious allergies, talk to health care staff about whether the vaccine is safe for you.