

COVID-19 Vaccination Fact Sheet

Pfizer and Moderna vaccines



How do mRNA COVID-19 vaccines work?

- The vaccine tells the cells in your body to make a protein that is found specifically on the virus that causes COVID-19. These “spike proteins,” although harmless to us, will trigger our body to start making antibodies. Our new antibodies will protect us from being sick if we are exposed to the virus.
- The vaccine does not contain the virus, so it cannot give you COVID-19.
- Both vaccines have been tested in large clinical trials to ensure they meet safety standards, and both have been licensed and approved by Health Canada.
- Both vaccines require two doses to work:
 - Pfizer doses are given up to 16 weeks apart for people 16 years of age and older.
 - Moderna doses are given up to 16 weeks apart for people 18 years of age and older.



What are the benefits of the vaccine?

- In trials, the vaccines were proven to be about 95% effective against the COVID-19 virus.
- Two doses of the vaccine are required for better protection. After the final dose, it may take another one to two weeks to achieve maximum protection against COVID-19. There is no information on long-term protection with this vaccine yet.



Who should not get this vaccine?

- Anyone with a history of a severe allergic reaction to the vaccine ingredients, including polyethylene glycol.
- Anyone with proven immediate or anaphylactic hypersensitivity to the vaccine ingredients or its packaging.
- Anyone who had a severe reaction to a previous dose of this vaccine.



Who should delay getting this vaccine?

- Anyone who has a fever, is sick with COVID-19 symptoms, or who has received a vaccine in the past 14 days.



Consult with your health care provider if you:

- Are pregnant, want to become pregnant soon after vaccination, or breastfeeding. It is recommended to avoid trying to get pregnant for at least a month after having the final dose of the vaccine.
- Have had a severe allergic reaction to another vaccine.



What are the side effects of the vaccine?

In general, the side effects observed during the clinical trials are similar to what you may have experienced with other vaccines.

Very common: (may affect more than 1 in 10 people)

- Pain at injection site
- Tiredness
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Chills
- Joint pain
- Fever
- Swelling or tenderness under the armpit (Moderna vaccine only)

Common: (may affect 1 in 100 people to 1 in 10 people)

- Redness and swelling at the injection site
- Nausea and vomiting (Moderna vaccine only)

Uncommon: (1 in 100 doses)

- Enlarged lymph nodes

Very rare:

- Serious allergic reactions such as anaphylaxis

If you have a reaction to the vaccine, contact your health care provider who will report the side effect directly to public health. Public health will keep track of the reported side effects to make sure the vaccine continues to be safe.



Do I still need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others if I have received this two-dose vaccine?

Yes. There is a small chance that you may still get COVID-19 after being vaccinated. It is still important for everyone to continue with public health measures like wearing a mask, physical distancing, washing hands often, and staying home if you are sick.



What are the ingredients of the vaccine?

Moderna Vaccine Ingredients

- mRNA (medicinal ingredient)
- 1,2-distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine (DSPC)
- acetic acid, cholesterol, lipid SM-102
- PEG2000DMG1,2-dimyristoyl-rac-glycerol, methoxy-polyethylene glycol
- tromethamine, tromethamine hydrochloride
- sodium acetate, sucrose and water for injection

Pfizer Vaccine Ingredients

- mRNA (medicinal ingredient)
- ALC-0315 = (4-hydroxybutyl) azanediyl) bis(hexane-6,1-diyl) bis(2-hexyldecanoate)
- ALC-0159 = 2-[(polyethylene glycol)-2000]-N, N-ditetradecylacetamide
- 1,2-distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine (DSPC)
- cholesterol, dibasic sodium phosphate dihydrate
- monobasic potassium phosphate



If I have had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need the vaccine?

Yes. There is some evidence to suggest that natural immunity from a COVID-19 illness may not last very long. It is best to get the vaccine to stay protected.