

COVID-19 vaccines – mRNA

(Age 6 months and older)

What are COVID-19 vaccines?

COVID-19 vaccines protect against the SARS-CoV-2 virus (also known as COVID-19). The virus causes an infection in the lungs and airways and is a type of respiratory illness. In some cases, the infection can cause problems with other organs or other parts of the body. Go to ahs.ca/covid to learn more about COVID-19.

COVID-19 mRNA vaccines help protect you from getting very sick from COVID-19 and needing care in the hospital. The Moderna SpikeVax LP.8.1 and Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty LP.8.1 vaccines are approved by Health Canada. They are updated mRNA vaccines that help protect you against the COVID-19 strains that are currently spreading.

Who should get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Visit alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-Albertans for details about COVID-19 vaccine eligibility.

Albertans at high risk

COVID-19 vaccine is available **free of charge** for Albertans age 6 months and older who:

- are at highest risk of severe illness
- are more likely to be exposed to COVID-19 and spread it to others

You can get the vaccine free of charge if:

- You are an eligible healthcare worker.
- You are a teacher.
- You live in a care facility like a continuing care home or a senior supportive living facility.
- You receive home care services, and you are unable to leave your home.
- You experience homelessness.
- You are age 65 years or older and receive the Alberta Seniors Benefit.
- You are age 6 months or older with a weakened immune system because of disease or medicine.
- You are age 6 months or older with certain health conditions such as heart, kidney or lung conditions, diabetes, obesity, or certain mental health disorders.
- You have cancer and are currently receiving treatment.
- You have a disability such as Down syndrome, a learning, intellectual, or developmental disability; ADHD; cerebral palsy; congenital disability; spinal cord injury.
- You are pregnant.

All other Albertans

All other Albertans age 6 months and older may be able to get COVID-19 vaccine depending on vaccine supply.

If you are not getting the vaccine free of charge at a local public health or community health centre, you will be mailed an invoice for a \$100 administrative cost. The invoice will also be available on MyChart within 5 to 10 business days.

Do I need a vaccine if I have already had COVID-19?

If you have already had COVID-19, it is not yet known how long your protection will last or how much protection you will have against variants. It is important to get a COVID-19 vaccine even if you have already had the virus.

If you had COVID-19, you can get the vaccine once you are no longer sick and are feeling better. If you developed multisystem inflammatory syndrome (MIS-C or MIS-A) as a child or adult after having COVID-19, check with your healthcare provider about timing for a COVID-19 vaccine.

See reverse for more information.

What if my child is getting a COVID-19 vaccine?

A parent or guardian must provide verbal or written consent for a child under age 18 years to get a COVID-19 vaccine. If a parent or guardian cannot be at the appointment, written consent must be provided. They can give consent in writing using the consent form at ahs.ca/VaccineUnder18. In some cases, children under age 18 years may be able to give their own consent.

How well do COVID-19 vaccines work?

How well COVID-19 vaccines work is different for each variant (also called strain) of the virus. As new COVID-19 variants are identified, vaccines are updated to offer better protection.

COVID-19 vaccines help to lower your risk of getting very sick from COVID-19 and needing care in the hospital. The best way to protect yourself from COVID-19 is to get immunized.

What vaccine can I or my child get?

If you are age 6 months to 11 years, you can get the Moderna vaccine.

If you are age 12 years and older, you can get either the Moderna or the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, depending on vaccine availability.

How many doses of mRNA COVID-19 vaccine do I or my child need?

COVID-19 vaccine recommendations – including how many doses to get – depends on your age and your immune system. Talk to your healthcare provider about what is right for you.

6 months to 4 years with a healthy immune system

If you are age 6 months to 4 years, you need 2 doses of COVID-19 vaccine, 8 weeks apart. The Moderna LP.8.1 vaccine can start or complete your 2-dose series.

If you have already had 2 or more doses of a non-LP.8.1 COVID-19 vaccine, you can get 1 dose of the Moderna LP.8.1 vaccine at least 3 months after your last dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

5 years and older with a healthy immune system

If you are age 5 years and older, you need 1 dose of the LP.8.1 COVID-19 vaccine. If you have had other COVID-19 vaccines in the past, you need to wait at least 3 months before getting your LP.8.1 COVID-19 vaccine.

Weakened immune system

If you are age 6 months or older with a weakened immune system, you need 3 doses of COVID-19 vaccine. The LP.8.1 COVID-19 vaccine can start or complete your 3-dose series.

If you have already had 3 or more doses of a non-LP.8.1 COVID-19 vaccine, you can get 1 dose of the LP.8.1 COVID-19 vaccine at least 3 months after your last dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

Additional dose

You can get an additional (extra) dose of LP.8.1 COVID-19 vaccine at least 3 months after your last LP.8.1 COVID-19 dose if:

- You are age 80 years or older.
- You are age 18 years or older and live in a continuing long-term care home or other group living settings for seniors.
- You are age 6 months and older and you have an eligible immunocompromising condition listed on alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-Albertans.
- You are age 65 to 79 years and you have an eligible underlying medication condition listed on alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-Albertans.

Off-label use

"Off-label use" means the vaccine is used differently than the way it was originally approved. Vaccine experts support the following off-label uses for LP.8.1 mRNA COVID-19 vaccines and have no safety concerns:

- Adults and children age 5 years or older who get a dose of Moderna LP.8.1 vaccine sooner than 6 months after the last dose.
- Adults and children age 5 years or older who get more than 1 dose of a LP.8.1 vaccine.
- Children age 6 months to 4 years who get more than 2 doses of a LP.8.1 vaccine.
- Children age 6 months to 4 years who have already had 2 or more doses of a non-LP.8.1 vaccine and get a dose of a LP.8.1 vaccine sooner than 6 months after the last dose.

Can I get an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine if I am pregnant or breastfeeding/ chestfeeding?

While you are pregnant, you have a higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine lowers your risk of getting seriously ill from the virus. You can get an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine if you are pregnant or breastfeeding/ chestfeeding. There is more to learn about the Moderna LP.8.1 and Pfizer-BioNTech LP.8.1 vaccines while pregnant or breastfeeding/ chestfeeding, but the information from the original mRNA vaccines found no concerns.

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding/ chestfeeding and have questions about getting a COVID-19 vaccine, talk to your healthcare provider.

Where can I get a COVID-19 vaccine?

Go to ahs.ca/covidvaccine to find out where and when you can get a COVID-19 vaccine.

Are there side effects from mRNA COVID-19 vaccines?

There can be side effects from mRNA COVID-19 vaccines, but they tend to be mild and go away in a few days. Side effects may include:

- redness where you had the needle that may look red on lighter skin or purple on darker skin
- swelling, a hard spot, or feeling sore where you had the needle
- feeling tired
- a headache
- a fever or chills
- body aches or sore joints
- feeling sick to your stomach (nausea), vomiting (throwing up), or loose stool (diarrhea)

At least 1 out of 100 people who got this vaccine reported 1 or more of these side effects. In some cases, it is unknown if the vaccine caused these side effects.

Current information shows that there is similar risk of side effects after each dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine.

It is important to stay at the clinic for 15 minutes after your vaccine. Some people may have a rare but serious allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. If anaphylaxis happens, you will get medicine to treat the symptoms.

It is rare to have a serious side effect. Call Health Link at 811 to report any serious or unusual side effects.

What rare events have been reported after getting an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine?

There have been very rare reports of myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle) and pericarditis (inflammation of the lining around the heart) after getting an mRNA vaccine. Most reported cases happened within 1 to 2 weeks after getting the vaccine. Cases were mild and got better with treatment.

Myocarditis and pericarditis can cause shortness of breath, chest pain, or a very fast or abnormal heart rate. Get medical help **right away** if you have any of these symptoms.

Research shows that for most people, including those who had heart inflammation after a COVID-19 vaccine, the risk of myocarditis and pericarditis is lower after additional doses than after the first 2 doses (original primary series).

Research is still happening to learn more about the risk of myocarditis and pericarditis and updated versions of the mRNA COVID-19 vaccines.

Talk to your healthcare provider before you get a dose of COVID-19 vaccine if:

- You had myocarditis or pericarditis within 6 weeks of getting a COVID-19 vaccine.
- You have a history of myocarditis or pericarditis and you have questions about getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

Your risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19 is much higher than your risk of having a rare event after these vaccines.

How can I manage side effects if they happen?

- To help with soreness and swelling, put a cool, wet cloth over the area where you had the needle.
- There is medicine to help with a fever or pain. Check with your healthcare provider if you are not sure what medicine or dose to take. Follow the directions on the package.
- Some people with health problems, such as a weak immune system, must call their healthcare provider if they get a fever. If you have been told to do this, call your healthcare provider even if you think the fever is from the vaccine.

What if I had or I am getting another type of vaccine?

You can get other vaccines at the same time as, any time before, or any time after an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine, including routine vaccines and the influenza vaccine.

Who may not be able to get an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine?

You may not be able to get an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine if:

- You have an allergy to any part of the vaccine. Be sure to tell your healthcare provider about any allergies you may have.
- You had a severe (serious) or unusual side effect after this vaccine or one like it.

If either of these apply, check with your healthcare provider before you get the vaccine.

The mRNA COVID-19 vaccine is not approved for babies under age 6 months.

Although you can get the vaccine if you have a mild illness such as a cold or fever, it is best to stay home until you feel better. This helps prevent spreading your illness to others.

Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider to find out when to get an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine if:

- You have a history of multisystem inflammatory syndrome as a child (MIS-C) or an adult (MIS-A).
- You have a weakened immune system (because of medicine you take or a health problem).
- You have had a stem cell or organ transplant.
- You are getting CAR T-cell therapy.
- You have a history of myocarditis, pericarditis, or both within 6 weeks of getting a dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

For more information about immunization



Call Health Link at 811



Scan the QR code or go to ahs.ca/immunize