

# COVID-19 Immunization Program

## Employers as Champions

### Supporting your employees pre- and post-immunization

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## Purpose

To provide employers with information on strategies they can use in their workplaces to emphasize the importance of immunization against COVID-19.

## Ways to Help

Employers can be champions for the COVID-19 Immunization Program by supporting their staff to get immunized as quickly as possible and helping encourage high uptake of the vaccine, including second doses.

There are many potential benefits of promoting and getting the COVID-19 vaccine for both employers and employees. Getting the vaccine means that employers can keep their workplace healthy by preventing employees from getting COVID-19, reduce absences due to illness, and improve productivity and morale.

Your employees are eligible for up to three hours of paid, job-protected leave for each vaccination appointment. You can read more about [COVID-19 vaccination leave here](#).

## Pre-Immunization

### Develop internal communications to provide access to reliable health information

There may be multiple reasons why employees are unsure about whether they should be immunized. The following tips may help address these:

- Encourage your leaders to be vaccine champions. These leaders should reflect the diversity of your workforce. Invite them to share with staff their personal reasons for getting vaccinated and remind staff why it's important to be vaccinated.
- Communicate with your staff that they can access up to three hours of paid leave to get vaccinated.
- Share the [COVID-19 vaccine question and answers resource](#);
- Speak transparently to all workers about the benefits of immunization and vaccine hesitancy (see Vaccine Hesitancy resource attached).
- Use the [COVID-19 vaccination posters](#) around the workplace.
- Include vaccination as a safety share in a meeting or make it a topic for a regular safety meeting.
- Make the decision to get vaccinated visible and celebrate it. Provide stickers for workers to wear after immunization and encourage them to post selfies on social media.

- Provide regular updates on topics like the benefits, safety, side effects and effectiveness of immunization, including the importance of second doses which offer the best and most long-lasting protection.

### Testimonials

One of the best ways to encourage people that the vaccines are safe is to show them people they know and trust safely getting immunized. We know people are more likely to get a vaccine when they see people they trust doing it.

Providing testimonials by employees in your organization can be a great way to encourage others to get immunized.

### Staff Support

Since onsite workplace clinics may not be feasible, employers are encouraged to assist with immunization in other ways:

- Arrange for transportation;
- Appoint staff as vaccine advocates who can help employees book appointments while at the workplace;
- Provide COVID-19 information in [additional languages](#).

### Incentives

Incentives can be utilized to encourage individuals to be immunized. Employers are encouraged to get creative but some examples are:

- Offer paid time off or additional vacation hours (this could be raffled off)
- Gift cards
- Raffle prizes
- Staff barbecues

Some employees may be concerned about sharing private medical information, including immunization records with their colleagues. These concerns can be mitigated by offering incentives when a certain percentage of staff have been immunized.

### Second Doses

A single dose of Canada's COVID-19 vaccines offer at least 80% protection against severe outcomes, including hospitalization and death. However, second doses are needed to get the best and most long-lasting protection against the virus.

Employers are encouraged to support their staff in completing the full COVID-19 immunization series by receiving both doses of vaccine.

Individuals who received the AstraZeneca vaccine for their first dose can choose either the AstraZeneca vaccine or an mRNA vaccine (Pfizer/Moderna) for their second dose.

Albertans who received a first dose of AstraZeneca will have a choice:

- Book a second appointment for the AstraZeneca vaccine by calling 811 or going online to AHS's booking site, or
- Book a second appointment for an mRNA vaccine through participating pharmacies or AHS.

This choice is being provided to Albertans as early research is indicating that if a person chooses to receive an mRNA vaccine as their second dose, there is an improved immune response

### **Mandatory Immunization**

While COVID-19 immunization will not be mandatory in Alberta, employers may have occupational health and safety policies that require certain immunizations as a condition of employment to protect themselves and others around them.

Employers should consider seeking legal advice on issues of human rights, labour and employment law, privacy, health information, and occupational health and safety before asking for proof of vaccination or creating vaccine requirements in the workplace.

## **Post-Immunization**

Employees are more likely to be immunized if they know they have their employer's support.

### **What to expect in the first few days**

Some individuals will experience short-term mild to moderate side effects for one to two days after receiving the vaccine. Some side effects, including fever, are more frequent after the second dose. Employers are encouraged to support their staff who may be worried about missing additional work due to possible side effects or for taking time off to bring their children to their immunization appointment.

It's important to encourage employees to book and follow up with their second dose appointment when they are eligible.