

COVID-19 Immunization Program

Employer Information

Purpose

To provide an overview of the COVID-19 Immunization Program so employers have the most up-to-date information, including current status and next steps.

Approved COVID-19 Vaccines

All vaccines used in Canada must obtain regulatory approval through Health Canada and meet strict standards for safety, quality and effectiveness. The following vaccines have been approved:

- AstraZeneca (18 years of age or older)¹
- Janssen (18 years of age or older)
- Moderna (18 of age or older)
- Pfizer-BioNTech (12 years of age or older)

Alberta receives vaccines, including the COVID-19 vaccines, through a bulk purchasing program coordinated by the Government of Canada. Under this program, the federal government determines on a per-capita basis how many COVID-19 vaccines Alberta receives, and works with Alberta on the timing of the shipments.

COVID-19 Immunization Program Goal, Objectives and Approach

Alberta's COVID-19 Immunization Program supports the overall provincial and federal program goal: *To minimize serious illness and overall deaths while minimizing societal disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

The COVID-19 Immunization Program objectives are to:

- Provide a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine for all Albertans for whom the vaccine is licensed and recommended;
- Allocate, distribute and administer COVID-19 vaccine as efficiently, equitably and effectively as possible; and,
- Monitor the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines.

Phases 1 and 2

As COVID-19 vaccines were in limited supply earlier on, the Government of Alberta implemented a sequenced approach for Phases 1 and 2 of the immunization program between December 2020 and April 2021. Those most at risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19 were prioritized.

Phase 3

Phase 3 is currently in progress and all Albertans 12 years of age and over are now able to get immunized with a COVID-19 vaccine, including persons who live on First Nations and Metis Settlements.

Second Doses

Starting June 1, Albertans are able to schedule second-dose appointments in the order they received their first doses. Individuals immunized in:

- March or earlier are eligible to book their second dose effective June 1.
- April are eligible to book their second dose starting June 14.

¹ AstraZeneca will only provided as a first doses to those Albertans over the age of 18 who cannot receive or refuse to receive Pfizer or Moderna vaccine.

- May be eligible to book their second dose starting June 28.

Progress to Date

Alberta's [COVID-19 Vaccine Program information](#) is updated daily with the number of doses administered, the number of fully immunized Albertans, and reported adverse events following immunization.

Preferential Use of Vaccines

Alberta is now receiving large and consistent shipments of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines, which will be used for all appointments unless someone has a contraindication to mRNA vaccines.

Administration of AstraZeneca vaccine will be for second doses and those who are not able to receive an mRNA vaccine.

Access to Immunization

For most Albertans, appointments can be booked through participating pharmacies, online with Alberta Health Services (AHS) or by calling Health Link. Some community physicians have also started administering vaccines in their clinics, with more being added based on supply.

At the time of booking, appointments will only be made for the first dose. Reminders to book a second dose will be sent via autodial/phone/text.

First Nations individuals living on-reserve will be able to book appointments through their local health centres. COVID-19 immunization outreach services will be available in Métis Settlements through AHS Public Health. First Nations, Inuit and Métis people can also access COVID-19 immunization services through AHS public health, community pharmacies, participating physicians and other outreach immunization clinics (e.g. friendship centres).

For other populations, AHS will provide outreach in specific circumstances where

needed, such as in some rural areas without pharmacies.

Workplace Immunization

Employers are encouraged to be immunization champions for their staff. An employer resource package has been developed to assist employers with getting their staff fully immunized with two doses of vaccine as quickly and as easily as possible. This includes specific FAQs, key messages to support conversations with employees, a resource toolkit including incentive ideas, and post-immunization support.

[COVID-19 vaccination posters are available for download](#) to support awareness and actions that can be taken to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Employers are encouraged to remind their employees about the importance of second doses, which are critical to keeping transmission low in the months ahead, and offer best and most long-lasting protection.

Post-Immunization

All individuals, including those immunized with COVID-19 vaccine, should continue to follow public health measures for prevention and control of COVID-19 infection and transmission. With doses being administered up to four months apart, it will take time to get most Albertans fully immunized. Research is ongoing to determine whether immunized people can transmit the virus to those who are not immunized, how effective the vaccines are against variants, and how long immunity lasts.

COVID-19 immunization will not be mandatory in Alberta, but it is highly encouraged and recommended.

Alberta's approach is collaborative rather than mandatory to encourage conversations on the benefits of immunization, while still respecting Albertans' right to make informed decisions about their own health. There is no intent to

restrict the activities of those who choose not to immunize.

More information is available on the [COVID-19 Vaccine Questions and Answers resource](#).

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