

Alberta  
COVID-19  
Immunization  
Policy

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Superseded

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Alberta COVID-19 Immunization Policy

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Alberta COVID-19 Immunization Policy (ACIP) sets out the requirements for the delivery of the COVID-19 Immunization Program.

The COVID-19 Immunization Program supports the 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.

## II. REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM

Health practitioners must be compliant with the [Immunization Regulation](#), Alberta Health immunization policies and the following requirements:

- [Immunization Regulation](#)
  - All immunization events must be reported electronically to the Provincial Immunization Repository (Imm/ARI).
  - Follow the strict storage and handling requirements for the vaccines.
  - Report adverse reactions following immunizations as they become aware.
- Vaccine inventory must be reconciled in the Alberta Vaccine Inventory System **every Monday and Thursday**.
- Follow the product monographs for information that includes:
  - Storage and Handling;
  - Vaccine preparation; and
  - Timeframe for use once thawed, reconstituted and/or vial punctured.
- Must have protocols in place for the management of anaphylaxis.
- Provide each client with complete informed consent (includes an overview of the vaccine, a discussion on the risks/benefits, side effects and verifying immunization history to determine if the client has received COVID-19 vaccine).
- Offer the client an immunization record.
- Include information to each client on participation in CANVAS active surveillance process for adverse events following immunization.
- Alberta Health Services will coordinate outreach immunization services.
  - As coordinated by AHS, community pharmacies can assist in offering outreach immunization services in seniors' congregate care facilities (e.g., long-term care, designated supportive living, supportive living).
- **COVID-19 vaccine must not be transferred between pharmacies or physician clinics unless directed by Alberta Health.**
  - Transferring vaccine increases risks of cold chain excursions.
  - Vaccine inventory cannot be tracked when transfers occur without Alberta Health's assistance.
- COVID-19 vaccines can now be given simultaneously with all other vaccines.

### III. CLIENT ELIGIBILITY

Albertans 5 years of age and older are eligible for a primary series of COVID-19 vaccines (two doses for all vaccines currently used in Alberta). Non-Alberta residents who live, work, go to school or travel in the province are also eligible to receive vaccine. Individuals without an active Alberta Health Care number must book an appointment with Alberta Health Services by calling Health Link 8-1-1.

#### Third dose (as part of three-dose primary series)

Albertans 5 years of age and older with certain immunocompromising conditions are eligible to book a third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine as part of a three-dose primary series at least 8 weeks after their second dose.

#### Third dose (Booster dose)

Albertans 12 years of age and older are eligible for a third dose 5 months after their second dose.

#### Additional or fourth dose

An **additional or fourth dose** may be required to provide stronger protection for those who have a suboptimal or waning immune response to vaccines. For eligibility criteria, see the [Alberta Health COVID-19 vaccine](#) and the [Alberta Immunization Policy](#) webpages.

### IV. REPORTING IMMUNIZATIONS TO IMM/ARI

As of January 1, 2021, the Immunization Regulation requires health practitioners to ensure a report respecting immunizations is electronically submitted to the Provincial Immunization Repository (Imm/ARI) within 7 days in accordance with the [Immunization Data Submission and Response Guidelines](#).

**For COVID-19 vaccine, immunization events must be reported daily to inform the Alberta Health daily immunization report.**

Required reporting can be accomplished through immunization web services, Immunization Direct Submission Mechanism (IDSM) or Alberta Blue Cross (ABC) claims.

- Alberta Health is working with vendors to integrate immunizing partners' point of care systems to the Provincial Immunization Repository (Imm/ARI).
- Providers can [register to access the IDSM by following these instructions](#).
- For pharmacists: COVID-19 immunizations are batched into Imm/ARI through the ABC claims data that pharmacists submit. Immunization Direct Submission Mechanism is for privately funded vaccine only.

Reason Codes listed in order of priority:

Reason Codes	Descriptor	Pin (Pharmacy use)
03	Health Care Workers not including LTC/DSL	10000003 (Pfizer/BioNTech) 20000003 (Moderna)
44	LTC/DSL Staff	10000044 (Pfizer/BioNTech) 20000044 (Moderna)
22	LTC/DSL Resident	10000022 (Pfizer/BioNTech) 20000022 (Moderna)
70	Other congregate care living settings (e.g. senior lodges, corrections, group homes)	10000070 (Pfizer/BioNTech) 20000070 (Moderna)
02	Advanced age (65+)	10000002 (Pfizer/BioNTech) 20000002 (Moderna)
66	Other Risk (Individuals 12* years to 64 years of age with underlying health conditions, see appendix for details)	10000066 (Pfizer/BioNTech) 20000066 (Moderna)
72	12* years to 64 years of age	10000072 (Pfizer/BioNTech) 20000072 (Moderna) 20003072 (Moderna booster half dose 50 mcg)
73	COVID-19 in-school immunization program	N/A
74	COVID-19 additional dose for travel	10000074 (Pfizer/BioNTech) 20000074 (Moderna)
75	5 years to 11 years of age**	11000075 (Pediatric Pfizer/BioNTech)
98	Research (AH approved)	10000098 (Pfizer/BioNTech) 20000098 (Moderna)

\* Pfizer and Moderna vaccine are the only vaccines licensed for 12-17 year olds. Those 12-29 years of age should be offered Pfizer vaccine instead of Moderna.

\*\*Children 5-11 years of age can only receive Pediatric Pfizer/BioNTech.

## V. REPORTING ADVERSE EVENTS FOLLOWING IMMUNIZATION (AEFI)

Health practitioners shall ensure that adverse events following immunization are reported to Alberta Health Services within 3 days of becoming aware.

**Passive Surveillance:** Passive AEFI surveillance systems rely on the client voluntarily reporting an AEFI for further investigation and reporting.

- As part of informed consent, clients are provided information on expected reactions following immunization and are encouraged to call Health Link or their health practitioner if there are events outside the expected reactions.
- As per the [Immunization Regulation](#) these events are to be reported to the AHS Provincial AEFI team, which determines if the events meet the reporting criteria for submitting the AEFI to Alberta Health.

**Active Surveillance:** Active AEFI surveillance involves proactively collecting data from clients who have received the vaccine through phone calls or surveys. The [CANVAS – COVID Study](#) is optional, and usually takes less than one minute to complete online. The initiative includes three email surveys sent to clients; one 8 days after dose 1, the second 8 days after dose 2, and the third six months later.

Enrollment should occur at the time of immunization and clients should be provided with the attached QR code from the printable poster which can be scanned or by provided the link: <https://canvas-covid.ca/>.



COVID Vaccine QR  
Handout\_18DEC2020

The [Active Surveillance and Reporting of Adverse Events following COVID-19 Immunization](#) policy includes case definitions and reporting requirements for COVID-19 vaccine, the process for 'active and passive surveillance' of AEFIs following COVID-19 vaccine, and the list and description of [adverse events of special interest](#) to be monitored following COVID-19 immunization. The COVID-19 policy is a supplement to the current [Adverse Events Following Immunization \(AEFI\) Policy](#).

See [Alberta Health Services information](#) on how to report an adverse event following immunization.

## VI. VACCINE STORAGE AND HANDLING

The requirements for the storage, handling and transportation of all COVID-19 vaccines are outlined in the:

- [Alberta Vaccine Storage and Handling for COVID-19 Vaccine](#).
- [Alberta Vaccine Storage and Handling Policy for Provincially Funded Vaccine](#)
- Product monographs
  - [Pfizer-BioNTech \(Comirnaty\) COVID-19 vaccine](#) (includes the pediatric formulation)
  - [Moderna \(SpikeVax\) COVID-19 vaccine](#)
  - [AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD \(Vaxzevria\) COVID-19 Vaccine](#)
  - [Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine](#)

## Temperature Excursions

- Health practitioners must report temperature excursions to the vaccine manufacturer within 24 hours.
  - The [Alberta Vaccine Storage and Handling for COVID-19 Vaccine](#) includes manufacturer contact information (including after hours).
- Any vaccine that is determined not viable must be discarded according to the health practitioners' standard of practice and must be entered into AVI as wasted using the correct reason.

## VII. ALBERTA VACCINE INVENTORY (AVI) MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The AVI Management System is the administrative system that supports the vaccine inventory management within the Alberta Immunization Program and is integral to the management of the COVID-19 Immunization Program. It is a secure online information system used by Alberta for the ordering, receiving and reconciliation of vaccines in the province.

All immunizing partners must receive the COVID-19 vaccine they have been shipped in AVI and are required to reconcile inventory using AVI **every Monday and Thursday** by 9 pm.

All vaccine delivery sites must have at least one provider (up to 2) who will be responsible for AVI. Access and [training](#) will be provided by Alberta Health.

## VIII. WASTAGE MITIGATION STRATEGIES

It is imperative that every effort is made to reduce COVID-19 vaccine wastage.

- Follow the storage and handling requirements to minimize vaccine wastage due to improper transportation, storage or handling.
- When possible, group individuals to be immunized on the same day. However, some wastage will be inevitable to ensure that no immunization opportunity is missed.

## IX. VACCINE PREPARATION

Each COVID-19 vaccine has unique preparation requirements that health practitioners must be aware of.

### Pfizer (Comirnaty)

- [COVID-19 vaccine \(mRNA\) –Pfizer-BioNTech – Ultra frozen Vaccine \(Comirnaty\) 12 years of age and older](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccine \(mRNA\) –Pfizer-BioNTech – Ultra frozen Vaccine \(Comirnaty\) 5 years to 11 years of age](#)
- [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine](#) (includes pediatric formulation) (Product Monograph)
- [The S.T.E.P.S. to Pfizer-Biotech COVID-19 vaccination](#)
- [Information about Low Dead-Volume Syringes and/or needles for Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine](#)

### Moderna (SpikeVax)

- [COVID-19 Vaccine \(mRNA\) – Moderna frozen vaccine \(SpikeVax\)](#)
- [Moderna COVID-19 vaccine \(Product Monograph\)](#)



- [SpikeVax Dosing & Administration and Storage & Handling](#)

#### **AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD (Vaxzevria)**

- [COVID-19 Vaccine – AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD](#)
- [AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD COVID-19 vaccine \(Product Monograph\)](#)

#### **Janssen**

- [COVID-19 Vaccine-Janssen](#)
- [Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine \(Product Monograph\)](#)

## **X. VACCINE ORDERING, ALLOCATIONS AND DISTRIBUTION**

Advanced purchase agreements with the Government of Canada are in place with seven COVID-19 vaccine manufacturers, and they have secured ~200 million doses of vaccine with options for another ~200 million doses if needed. A National Allocation Framework was developed to ensure allocation is on a per-capita basis until such time as there is enough COVID-19 vaccine supply to resume the FPT allocation process using the established Vaccine Supply Working Group (VSWG) framework.

COVID-19 vaccines enter the province in various logistical distribution routes. Depending on vaccine type and storage and handling requirements, the vaccines can be distributed:

- From the manufacturer directly to the location immunizations are being offered.
- From the manufacturer directly to a third party distributor for further distribution (for example, pharmacy wholesale distributors that ship the vaccine to pharmacies).
- From the manufacturer to the Provincial Vaccine Depot for further distribution.

Allocations are based on the health practitioner's ability to administer the vaccine within the timeframes allowed based on the type of vaccine and the amount of vaccine available. Instructions on how health practitioners will receive the vaccine will be communicated through Alberta Health in partnership with Alberta Health Services, Indigenous Services Canada, Alberta Blue Cross and Alberta Medical Association.

## **XI. EDUCATION/TRAINING RESOURCES**

Alberta Health:

- [The Alberta COVID-19 Immunization Policy](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccine biological pages:](#)
  - [COVID-19 vaccine \(mRNA\) –Pfizer-BioNTech – Ultra frozen Vaccine \(Comirnaty\) 12 years of age and older](#)
  - [COVID-19 vaccine \(mRNA\) –Pfizer-BioNTech – Ultra frozen Vaccine \(Comirnaty\) 5 years to 11 years of age](#)

- [COVID-19 Vaccine \(mRNA\) – Moderna frozen vaccine \(SpikeVax\)](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine – AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD \(Vaxzevria\)](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine- Janssen](#)
- [Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine Adult and Pediatric Comparison Table](#)
- [Alberta Vaccine Storage and Handling for COVID-19 Vaccine](#)
- [Active Surveillance and Reporting of Adverse Events following COVID-19 Immunization \(AEFI\) Policy](#)
- [COVID-19 immunization: Guidance during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- [Alberta Inventory System \(AVI\) training \(Must be completed for those health practitioners not already using AVI\)](#)

Alberta Health Services:

- [Health Professional Immunization Information COVID-19](#)
  - COVID-19 Immunization Orientation - [PowerPoint](#) | [Recording Session](#)
  - [COVID-19 Immunization Demonstration](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Pharmacies:

- [Alberta Blue Cross pharmacy COVID-19 immunization](#)

Physicians:

- [Alberta Medical Association COVID-19 vaccination in community clinics](#)

National resources:

- [The National Advisory Committee on Immunization \(NACI\): Statements and Publications](#)
- [Health Canada taking further action to confirm the benefit-risk profile of the AstraZeneca vaccine](#)
- [COVID-19 for health professionals: Vaccines](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccination Information Resources: Tool Kit for Health Care Providers](#)

Manufacturer resources:

- COVID-19 vaccine product monographs
  - [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine \(includes pediatric formulation\)](#)
  - [Moderna COVID-19 vaccine](#)
  - [AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD- COVID-19 Vaccine](#)
  - [Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine](#)
- [Pfizer- BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine Information for Canadian Health Care Professionals](#)
- [Important Safety Information on AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine and COVISHIELD: Risk of Thrombosis with Thrombocytopenia](#)