

COVID-19 FAQ

Q. What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

- Common symptoms include fever, dry cough and fatigue.
- Less common symptoms include loss of taste or smell, nasal congestion, conjunctivitis, sore throat, headache, muscle or joint pain, rashes, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, and chills or dizziness.
- Severe symptoms include shortness of breath, loss of appetite, confusion, persistent pain or pressure in chest and high fever.
- Symptoms can take up to 14 days to appear after exposure.

Q. How does COVID-19 spread?

- COVID-19 spreads through respiratory droplets and aerosols (smaller droplets) created when an infected person talks, sings, shouts, coughs or sneezes.
- COVID-19 can also spread by touching something that has the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes with unwashed hands.

Q. Who is at the greatest risk of getting COVID-19?

- Those who are in contact with a large number of people.
- Those who live in group settings.
- Those with social, economic or personal barriers limiting access to public health measures.

Q. Who is at the greatest risk of developing severe COVID-19?

- Older adults (increasing risk with each decade, especially over 60 years).
- People of any age with chronic medical conditions, including: lung or heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, kidney disease, liver disease, dementia or stroke.
- People who are immunocompromised, including those with an underlying medical condition such as cancer, or those taking medication which lower the immune system.
- People with obesity, such as having a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or higher.

Q. How can we protect others and ourselves from COVID-19?

- Physical distancing, wearing a mask (especially when distancing cannot be maintained), keeping rooms well ventilated, avoiding crowds, and vaccination are all proven and effective measures for slowing the spread of COVID-19.
- Contact tracing, notification and follow up is used to identify, educate, and monitor individuals who have had close contact with someone who is infected by COVID-19. Please visit this [link](#) to learn more about Public Health Ontario’s contact tracing program.

Q. What types of COVID-19 tests are used in Ontario?

- There are two primary methods used testing: (i) Molecular-based tests (aka “lab-based PCR testing”) and (ii) Rapid testing, including Rapid PCR tests and Antigen tests.

COVID-19 VACCINE FAQ

Q. What vaccines are presently available and what kind are they?

- Health Canada has approved four vaccines: (i) the Pfizer BioNTech mRNA vaccine; (ii) the Moderna mRNA-vaccine, (iii) the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine/COVISHIELD vaccine, and (iv) and the Janssen Inc. vaccine (a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson).
- The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are “messenger RNA” or “mRNA” vaccines.
- The AstraZeneca and Janssen vaccines are viral vector-based vaccine.

Q. Who is eligible for the vaccine?

- As of August 24, 2021 the following are eligible for COVID-19 vaccines in Ontario:
 - Pfizer: individuals 12 years of age and older before December 31, 2021.
 - Moderna: individuals 12 years of age and older.
 - AstraZeneca: individuals 18 years of age and older.
 - Janssen: individuals 18 years of age and older.

Q. What are the side effects of COVID-19 vaccines?

- Serious adverse reactions to the vaccine are extremely rare.
- It is common to have mild to moderate temporary side effects for a day or so after vaccination. This is a natural response, as the body works to build immunity to COVID.
- Some of the common side effects of vaccination include: pain at injection site, tiredness, headache, muscle and joint pain, chills and fever, and flu-like symptoms.

Q. How effective are vaccines in preventing COVID-19?

- The Pfizer vaccine was 95% effective in protecting trial participants aged 16 and above, and 100% effective in those 12-15 years old, 1 week after the second dose.
- The Moderna vaccine was 94.1% effective two weeks after the second dose.
- The AstraZeneca vaccine was about 62% in preventing symptomatic COVID-19 two weeks after the second dose.

Q. Can vaccinated individuals transmit COVID-19?

- Yes, but evidence suggests that the risk of transmission from vaccinated individuals is less than the risk of transmission from unvaccinated individuals.

Q. Will I need to get a booster shot?

- With the emergence of variants against which vaccine efficacy may be decreased, additional vaccine doses may be necessary in the future. Other countries have already started booster shot programs, and Ontario permits such programs for vulnerable populations. Contact your own Public Health Unit for the availability of programs in your area.