



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **How does COVID-19 make us sick? How serious is the risk?**

COVID-19 is a viral infection that mainly affects the lungs. Older adults and people with health conditions are more likely to become really sick from COVID-19. It can damage the lungs, heart or brain. Long-term symptoms may include feeling tired, trouble breathing, trouble concentrating, muscle aches and other symptoms. The COVID-19 virus continues to change into new variants. Some variants can spread more easily, and make people sicker.

### **Should I get vaccinated?**

Yes! COVID-19 vaccines approved in Canada are for people 12 to 18 years of age and older, including people who are pregnant or breastfeeding, seniors, and anyone with a medical condition. These vaccines protect you from getting and spreading COVID-19. They also protect you against getting seriously sick or dying from COVID-19.

### **How do the vaccines work?**

COVID-19 vaccines tell our body to make antibodies that protect us from the COVID-19 virus. Three of the vaccines approved in Canada need two doses. The Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) vaccine only needs one dose.

### **Was development of the vaccine rushed?**

Development of the COVID-19 vaccine was relatively swift, but was not rushed, and followed all the required safety steps and checks. Since the vaccines were developed during the pandemic it did not take long to find large numbers of people to participate in safe and rigorous vaccine trials.

### **Are the vaccines safe for everyone?**

All vaccines are safe for people with health conditions such as heart or lung problems, diabetes or high blood pressure. They are also safe for people with an auto-immune condition, or a weak immune system because of illness or treatment, but the vaccine may not work as well in people with these conditions.

### **What about those who are pregnant or trying to get pregnant?**

People who are pregnant are considered high-risk for COVID-19 and encouraged to get vaccinated as quickly as possible with an mRNA vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna). The vaccine is safe and effective in pregnancy.

*Book an appointment by visiting [shn.ca/VaxFacts](https://shn.ca/VaxFacts) or by calling 416-438-2911 ext. 5738*

### **Am I protected from COVID-19 right after I get vaccinated?**

No. It takes at least two weeks after getting the vaccine to be protected. For vaccines that require two doses, full protection occurs 1-2 weeks after your second dose.

There is a small chance that you could still get COVID-19 after vaccination. It is important to continue to follow public health measures until more people are vaccinated. Scientists are currently studying how long the vaccines provide protection from COVID-19. In the future, you may need to get a booster vaccine to keep your protection from COVID-19, similar to how people get a flu vaccine every year.

### **What if I don't take a second dose of the vaccines?**

It is important that you get your 2<sup>nd</sup> dose. You will have much higher protection after two doses than after one – especially against emerging variants of the virus.

### **What are the ingredients in the vaccines? Are they Halal?**

The vaccines contain fats, salts, sugars and buffers. They do not contain eggs, gelatin or pork, gluten, latex, preservatives, antibiotics, aluminum, or fetal cells. Serious allergic reactions are rare. Allergic reactions can be treated and are usually temporary. The vaccines are certified Halal by the Muslim Medical Association of Canada and the Canadian Council of Imams.

### **Can the vaccine give me COVID-19?**

No. The vaccines do not contain the virus that causes COVID-19. The vaccines teach our immune systems to identify part of the virus that causes COVID-19 and to defend against it, without our bodies ever being exposed to the actual virus. .

### **Can I get sick from getting the vaccine? Are there side effects?**

Approximately 20 per cent of people have side effects. Most are mild to moderate, and last one to three days. Side effects usually mean that the vaccine is working to stimulate your immune system.

Common side effects include:

- redness, pain, itching or swelling at the injection site
- fever
- headache
- feeling tired
- muscle aches
- joint pain
- chills
- nausea and/or vomiting

### **Delay Vaccination**

- If you recently received another vaccine (not a COVID-19 vaccine), make sure that your COVID-19 vaccine appointment is at least 14 days after you received the other vaccine.
- If you have a fever or any COVID-19 symptoms, wait until you are feeling better before getting vaccinated.
- If you have been advised to self-isolate because you tested positive or were in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, please reschedule your appointment for a later date, when your isolation period is over.

### **Consult a Health Care Provider**

Speak with your health care provider or allergist before getting the vaccine if you:

- are on medications that weaken your immune system – you may want to time your vaccination with your medications
- had an allergic reaction within four hours after receiving your first COVID-19 vaccine dose
- have severe allergies to any of the vaccine ingredients

### **Continue to Protect Yourself and Others**

Until more people are vaccinated, continuing public health measures including physical distancing, wearing a mask, and staying home if you are sick will help protect you against COVID-19 and the variants of concern. For more information: Talk to your health care provider or visit our website at [www.scarbvacine.ca](http://www.scarbvacine.ca)

### **Does the vaccine contain any microchips or tracking devices?**

There is no vaccine "microchip", and the vaccine will not track people or gather personal information into a database.

### **Are Black, Indigenous, and people of colour, getting the same vaccines that doctors and White people get?**

Yes. The type of vaccine administered does not vary based on profession or race.

### **Will the vaccine alter my DNA? Will mRNA stay in my body?**

Vaccines that use mRNA technology, like the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines, do not interact with or do anything to your DNA. Our bodies break down and get rid of the mRNA soon after it is finished using the instructions for defense against the virus that it has provided.

### **Will the vaccine make me sterile?**

No. There has not been a single case of sterility linked to a COVID-19 vaccination.

### **Do I need to get the vaccine if I have already had COVID-19?**

It is beneficial to get the vaccine even if you have had COVID-19, as natural immunity created by defeating an infection varies from person to person. COVID-19 antibodies last for approximately 3-6 months after an infection. This means, you can contract COVID-19 again, and it could hit you harder the second time around.

### **What is myocarditis?**

Myocarditis is a condition in which the heart is inflamed. This condition typically occurs after viral infections and in young men aged 19-30. Studies have shown that there is a very slight increase in the rate of myocarditis above the baseline rate, after the second dose of mRNA vaccines. This remains a very rare condition. In addition, these cases of myocarditis that were vaccine-associated, were found to be more mild than typical cases of myocarditis. Patients made a full recovery and most did not require hospitalization.

Those that did, were discharged quickly. The COVID-19 virus remains a much greater risk to heart and lung function than the rare chance of vaccine-associated myocarditis.

### **Is mixing and matching vaccines safe?**

Taking the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine as your second dose is safe and effective, whether your first dose was AZ, Pfizer, or Moderna. Both Pfizer and Moderna are mRNA vaccines. Their mechanism is the same. Their rates of effectiveness and their safety profile are almost identical. They are like Coke and Pepsi! The concept of mixing and matching similar vaccines with different brand names for booster shots has been used many times in the past (hepatitis, tetanus) and has been safe and effective. This is the same logic used here.

### **Make a Phone Appointment with a Doctor at VaxFacts Clinic!**

If you have any questions, concerns, or want to get further clarification by speaking one-to-one with a medical doctor in a judgement-free space, please make an appointment by calling 416-438-2911 ext. 5738 or visiting [shn.ca/VaxFacts](https://shn.ca/VaxFacts).