



COVID-19 Vaccine

WHO GETS VACCINATED WHEN

When will the vaccine start rolling out?

We received our first shipment of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine on December 15 and vaccination started December 16. We received our first shipment of Moderna vaccine on December 30. Nova Scotians are being vaccinated over three phases.

How quickly is the vaccine rolling out? Why does it seem so slow?

This is the biggest and most complex vaccination program our province has ever seen. Our teams are working very hard to protect Nova Scotians against COVID-19. Each time we get shipments, that vaccine is quickly rolled out across the province and in people's arms, with enough held back to ensure they all get their second dose on time. The latest information on COVID-19 [vaccine doses administered](#) is available on our website.

How many people can you immunize in a day?

The number of people immunized each day depends on how many people choose to get vaccinated and how many clinics or providers are offering the vaccine at any given time.

When will the vaccine be openly available to whoever wants it?

Nova Scotia's COVID-19 immunization plan includes 3 phases. Each phase identifies when different groups can receive the vaccine. The third phase focuses on all Nova Scotians who didn't receive the vaccine in earlier phases, including all professions and people with health conditions. Most Nova Scotians will be able to receive their vaccine during phase 3.

In the meantime, we ask Nova Scotians to be patient and continue to be vigilant about the public health measures. At least for the initial phases of rolling out the vaccine, we all still need to wear a mask, stay 2 metres/6 feet apart from others, practice proper hand hygiene, follow gathering limits, and stay home if unwell.

How is the vaccine being rolled out to Nova Scotians? Who will get it first after health care workers and long-term care?

As Nova Scotia's COVID-19 vaccine rollout continues to expand, age will become the primary factor in who gets immunized and when. Nova Scotians who are 80 and older who live in the community will receive the vaccine first. The next group will be those 79 to 75, continuing in five-year blocks until all Nova Scotians receive their vaccine.

Why is the vaccine being rolled out to Nova Scotians based on age?

The greatest risk factor for COVID-19 patients is age. Those who are older are at the greatest risk of severe symptoms due to COVID. Nova Scotia's immunization program is focused on immunizing as many people, as quickly as possible, and protecting those at greatest risk. Making the vaccine available based on age is also the fastest and simplest way to get vaccine in arms.

How will the vaccine roll out to seniors? When will it happen and where will the clinics be?

The first community-based clinic for Nova Scotians over age 80 will begin on Feb. 22. Learnings from this prototype clinic will inform how future clinics are set up. Those eligible to participate in this prototype clinic will receive a letter from MSI with details on how to schedule their appointments.



Nine more community-based clinics in Halifax Regional Municipality, Truro, Cape Breton Regional Municipality, Kentville, Yarmouth, Antigonish, Amherst and Bridgewater are planned to open across the province in March for those over age 80.

Will pharmacists and doctors administer the vaccine? When?

Pharmacists and physicians who want to administer the COVID-19 vaccine at COVID vaccine clinics will soon be able to. Prototype clinics in pharmacies will launch in early March, with plans to expand to more locations by early April.

How will I know when it's time for me to get vaccinated?

There will be a lot of communication as the vaccine rolls out to ensure Nova Scotians know when they may be able to get vaccinated. We ask everyone to please be patient and watch for updates.

Is there a wait list people can get on for early vaccination if they have a condition that makes them vulnerable? Can you apply or appeal to get it earlier?

No. We understand that Nova Scotians are eager to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, but who can receive the vaccine and when is based on:

- The National Advisory Committee on Immunization's Recommendations on the use of COVID-19 vaccine
- Those at highest risk based on our local epidemiology
- Age, as we know the impact COVID-19 has on older people
- Vaccine supply

There will be a lot of communication as the vaccine rolls out to ensure Nova Scotians know when they may be able to get vaccinated. We ask everyone to please be patient and watch for updates.

Is there enough vaccine for everyone?

Yes. The federal government has secured enough vaccine to vaccinate everyone who wants it. We expect it will be fall before everyone in Nova Scotia who wants a vaccination to get one.

Where will people get vaccinated?

Where you will receive your vaccine will depend on when you are eligible to receive it.

OHS at the Nova Scotia Health Authority will schedule vaccination for healthcare workers. They will be contacted directly to schedule an appointment.

Long-term care facilities will set up and manage their own clinics. These facilities already have processes in place to deliver vaccine.

With the exception of a few select groups identified in Phase 1 and 2, who will be invited into targeted clinics, the majority of Nova Scotians will receive the vaccine in community-based or provider-based clinics.



We will make Nova Scotians aware through broad and targeted communications about when they are able to get vaccinated.

Will we ever be able to get vaccinated in a doctor's office or pharmacy?

The province has engaged Doctors Nova Scotia and the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia on how their members can support vaccine delivery in the community, so Nova Scotians can get vaccinated quickly and safely. Prototype clinics will also include provider-based clinics in pharmacies. Pharmacists and physicians who want to administer the vaccine at clinics will soon be able to.

Are international students eligible get vaccinated?

International students in Nova Scotia can get vaccinated free of charge. When they can get vaccinated depends on the provincial rollout plan based on key groups.

Are other non-residents eligible to get vaccinated if they are in Nova Scotia?

Non-residents can get vaccinated free of charge. When they can get vaccinated depends on the provincial rollout plan based on key groups.

KEY GROUPS FOR VACCINATION

Why did vaccination start only in Central Zone? Why not provincewide?

First, we had a limited number of doses. Second, there are strict transportation, handling, and storage requirements of the Pfizer vaccine. It must be stored at -70°C in a special freezer. Initially, these special freezers were only available in Central Zone. Third, our epidemiology in the province at the time demonstrated outbreaks and clusters within Central Zone.

We now have cold storage sites around the province: Halifax, Sydney, Colchester, Kentville and Yarmouth. These sites coupled with more vaccine will allow us to roll out vaccination across the province, starting with priority groups.

How do healthcare workers know when they will get vaccinated?

Healthcare workers will hear from their employer when it's time to get vaccinated. If you have questions, you can contact NSHA occupational health.

When will other healthcare and essential workers start getting the vaccine?

Phase 2 will focus on:

- anyone who works in a hospital and may come into contact with patients
- community healthcare providers, including doctors, nurses, dentists, dental hygienists, pharmacists and pharmacy technicians
- people who live in large group settings (correctional facilities, shelters and temporary foreign worker housing) and those who work directly with them
- people who are required to regularly travel in and out of the province for work, like truck drivers and rotational workers (people who live in Nova Scotia or New Brunswick and cross the border every day for work are not included in this group)
- people who are responsible for food security and can't maintain public health measures because of the nature of their work (like large food processing plants)



- people who are 80 and older
- people who are 75 to 79

Who is considered an essential worker for vaccination purposes?

People who are required to regularly travel in and out of the province for work, like truck drivers (people who live in Nova Scotia or New Brunswick and cross the border every day for work are not include in this group) and people who are responsible for food security and can't maintain public health measures because of the nature of their work (like large food processing plants) will receive the vaccine in Phase 2.

All other professions will receive the vaccine in Phase 3. In this phase, Nova Scotians can receive the vaccine by age group declining in five-year increments.

Will you transport nursing home residents to the hospital or, by they time they can get it, will you be able to bring it to the nursing home?

Long-term care facilities will set up onsite clinics to vaccinate residents.

HOW DOES THE VACCINE WORK

Do you only need one dose of the vaccine? Is it delivered via a needle?

Health Canada has secured several brands of COVID-19 vaccine, but currently only the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are approved for use. These two brands are delivered through a needle into the muscle of the upper arm and they both require a second dose either 21 or 28 days apart.

Do you need a new vaccination every year, like the flu shot?

At this time, it is unknown how long the protection will last. As vaccination rolls out, national groups will evaluate the data and provide an update how long the protection lasts and whether there may be a need for additional doses.

Is there a fee for the vaccine?

The vaccine is free to everyone who wants it.

Do you need a Nova Scotia health (MSI) card/number to get vaccinated?

No, you do not need Nova Scotia health (MSI) card/number to get vaccinated. It is available to anyone who wants it, including international students and others who are in our province when their group becomes eligible for it.

Are there side effects of the vaccine? People in other countries are having serious adverse reactions.

Like any medication, vaccines can cause side effects or reactions. The most common is soreness at the site of injection. Serious adverse reactions are extremely low and rare – less than one in a million.

What happens when someone has a serious adverse reaction?

If you believe you're having a serious adverse reaction to the COVID-19 vaccine, you should speak to a healthcare provider or call 811. Healthcare providers in Nova Scotia are required by law to report certain adverse events following immunization to Public Health at the Nova Scotia Health Authority.

Can the vaccine give me COVID-19?



No. The vaccines currently approved or under review by Health Canada do not contain the virus. Therefore, they cannot give you COVID-19.

Will the vaccine be mandatory for anybody? What about healthcare workers and others who work in patient care?

We strongly encourage everyone to get vaccinated to protect themselves, the people around them, and the people they care for. Vaccination is not mandatory for anybody.

Because the vaccine is not mandatory, how many people do you think will choose to receive it?

We do not know how many Nova Scotians will choose to receive the vaccine. We strongly encourage vaccination, but it is voluntary.

Ontario says it may require people to show proof they have received the COVID-19 vaccine in order to travel or attend activities in communal spaces. Will Nova Scotians require proof of immunization?

Nova Scotians will be able to access a record of immunization, like they can for other vaccines they have received.

WHO SHOULD NOT GET VACCINATED

Are there circumstances in which I should not get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Some Nova Scotians may not be able to receive the vaccine because of age or health condition. As more information about the vaccine becomes available, information about who can receive the vaccine may change. You should consult your healthcare provider or pharmacist if you have any concerns about receiving the vaccine.

For more information about who the vaccine is not recommended for visit:

<http://www.nshealth.ca/covid-19-vaccine-information> .

If a woman or couple is currently trying to get pregnant, should they wait or have a pregnancy test before getting vaccinated?

You can speak with your healthcare provider. The national recommendation is that women should wait 28 days after receiving the vaccine to conceive.

If the vaccine cannot be given to anyone younger than 16, how will we protect our children?

We know some groups will be unable to be vaccinated. It is important for those who can be immunized, to get immunized, to protect others. As more information about the use of vaccine in younger people becomes available from Health Canada, we will adjust our immunization efforts.

IMMUNITY

How long does it take for the vaccine to provide protection or immunity?

To provide appropriate immunity, you must have both doses of the vaccine. The currently approved vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna) have demonstrated high efficacy one to two weeks after the second dose.



If I receive the vaccine does that mean I no longer have to wear a mask, physical distance or follow other public health measures?

At least for the initial phases of rolling out the vaccine, we will all still need to wear a mask, stay 2 metres/6 feet apart from others, practice proper hand hygiene, follow gathering limits, and stay home if unwell. That includes people who are vaccinated. It's important to remember that some people cannot be vaccinated. We all need to do our part to protect the people around us, as well as ourselves.

Why are vaccinated people still required to follow public health measures? Isn't that the point of a vaccine?

Although we know the vaccine is highly effective in preventing symptomatic COVID-19, the vaccine needs to be studied further to make sure that people who have received it can't transmit the virus asymptotically. Until the majority of Nova Scotians have been vaccinated, all residents and visitors in Nova Scotia are required to follow all public health measures.

How long will we need to practice public health measures even though we have a vaccine?

It is difficult to say. As more information becomes available from vaccine studies, guidance will be provided.

If I was already COVID-positive, will I still need the vaccine?

Yes, you should get vaccinated.

VACCINE SUPPLY

How many doses of vaccine have we purchased?

Vaccine has been secured by the federal government, and they are providing each province with their share. Nova Scotia expects to receive more than a million doses – enough for more than 500,000 people – over the next six months.

Where will the vaccine be stored?

We have a well-established process for receiving and distributing vaccine and we are adapting our process for a product that requires special storage. By the end of January, we will have 10 cold storage sites across the province.

What is the role of the Canadian Armed Forces?

The Canadian Armed Forces has assigned five specialists in logistics who we can use as needed. They are experts in logistics and project management with access to an array of resources to support our vaccination efforts.

What is the status of other COVID-19 vaccines?

The federal government is responsible for securing the COVID-19 vaccine. Health Canada approves vaccines for use. They've approved the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines to date, and Nova Scotia has received doses of both.

These are new vaccines that were rushed through approvals. Is it safe?



Canada is recognized around the world for high standards for vaccine review, approvals, and monitoring systems. After a vaccine is approved for use, evidence on safety and effectiveness is reviewed by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization. It provides recommendations on immunizations for individuals and for public health programs.

Health Canada only approves a vaccine if it is supported by robust scientific data and evidence. A similar process was used in 2009 to review and authorize the H1N1 pandemic vaccine. There is no reason to believe that the vaccine is not safe. Like other viruses, the best defence is vaccination.

Where can volunteers sign up to help with immunization?

The Nova Scotia Health Authority is creating a special COVID-19 volunteer pool to provide support to our caregivers and health care teams. There are volunteer opportunities across Nova Scotia. If you are interested in volunteering in an immunization clinic or supporting the response to COVID-19 in another area, please [complete the volunteer application form](#) and Volunteer Services team will contact you to discuss potential opportunities.

Where can I learn more?

There is [vaccine information for Nova Scotia](#) on our website. The federal government has [general information about COVID-19 vaccination](#) as well as [detailed information about each approved vaccine](#) . There is also information for public health professionals at the [Canadian Vaccination Evidence Resource and Exchange Centre](#).