COVID-19 VACCINE

What happens when I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

What is being done to make sure I am safe when I get the vaccine?

- There are steps in place to protect your health and safety when you get the vaccine.
- Doctors and nurses will ask you if:
  - you have any COVID-19 symptoms
  - you had another vaccine, such as the flu shot, in the past 14 days (two weeks)
  - you have had any serious allergic reactions in the past.
- When you go for your vaccine, everyone will wear a mask, wash their hands and try to stand 6 feet away from other people while waiting. Contact your doctor if you cannot wear a mask.
- If you are worried or have any questions, tell the person giving you the vaccine so they can help.
- Doctors and nurses will watch for any serious side effects as people get the vaccine.

What should I do before coming to the vaccine clinic?

- If you would like an interpreter at your vaccine appointment, please ask your doctor or care team to arrange it.
- Wear a comfortable, loose shirt that you can roll up to your shoulder.
- Bring your mask and wash your hands when you get to the clinic. Contact your doctor if you cannot wear a mask.
- Bring your health card or another form of ID (for example, passport or driver’s license). If you don’t have any of these, you can still get the vaccine. Speak to someone on your care team, or the person giving you the vaccine if you don’t have ID.
- Bring a support person, if needed.
- Bring your yellow immunization card, if you have one.
- Eat your meals as usual.
What should I do BEFORE I get the vaccine?

- Before getting the vaccine, tell the doctor or health care provider if you:
  - are not feeling well
  - have any COVID-19 symptoms
  - are pregnant
  - are breastfeeding
  - have fainted when you have received other needles
  - are very afraid of getting needles and what might help you calm down
  - have had an allergic reaction to a vaccine before
  - have had any other serious allergic reactions before
  - take anticoagulants (blood thinners)
  - have a weak immune system (for example, if you have HIV, hepatitis C, cancer or other serious illnesses)
  - have had another vaccine in the past 14 days (2 weeks).

- Even if you belong to one of the groups above, this does not automatically mean you cannot get the vaccine. It is just good to talk to the doctor first and make sure it is safe for you to get it.

- If it’s your second dose of vaccine, tell the person giving you the vaccine if you had any side effects after your first dose of the vaccine.

- Ask any questions you may have about the vaccine.

What will happen WHEN I get the vaccine?

- You will be asked to sign a form before getting the vaccine to make sure you agree to get the vaccine and that all your questions have been answered. This is called giving consent. You can decide at any time to say no and not sign the form.

- A doctor or other health care worker will give you a needle in the top part of your arm, similar to the flu shot.

- The vaccine will work to build up your immune system and make it stronger.
What happens AFTER I get the vaccine?

- After you get the vaccine, you will need to wait for 15 minutes to make sure you are feeling OK.
- If you have had any serious allergic reactions before, you will be asked to wait a bit longer. They will want to make sure that you are safe.
- The team is prepared to treat any immediate reactions, if they happen.
- You might experience some of these common side effects:
  - sore arm
  - redness and swelling where you got the needle
  - headache
  - nausea and/or vomiting
  - mild fever or chills
  - sore muscles or joint pain
  - feeling tired.
- These side effects are normal and will go away.
- You will also be watched for any serious or unusual side effects, but these are rare. If you do have serious side effects, the doctors will look after you.
- If you are feeling worried or do not feel well, you should talk to your doctor or another member of the care team.
- You should not get any other vaccines for at least 28 days (4 weeks) after your second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

How will I know if I am having a reaction to the vaccine? When should I get help from a doctor?

- Serious reactions or side effects from the vaccine are rare.
- However, you should call 911 or talk to your doctor or another member of your care team right away if you have:
  - trouble breathing
  - hives
  - swelling of the face or mouth
  - a very pale face
  - serious drowsiness
  - fever
  - seizures
  - feelings of pins and needles and/or numbness in your body.
- The doctors and nurses will monitor you for any allergic reactions after you get the vaccine.
How many times do I have to get the COVID-19 vaccine?

- You have to get the vaccine **2 times** to be fully protected from COVID-19. The person giving you the vaccine will tell you when you need to get your second one.
- You will likely get your second vaccine 3 to 6 weeks after your first one.
- One dose is not enough. It is very important to get the second dose of the vaccine even if you do have mild symptoms after the first dose.

After I get the vaccine, do I still need to be careful?

- You are not fully protected against COVID-19 after your first dose of vaccine because it takes your body some time to be ready to fight COVID-19.
- You need the second dose of the vaccine to be fully protected.
- After your second dose, you still need to be careful, because we don’t know if you can still give COVID-19 to other people even if you don’t feel sick.
- It will take time to vaccinate everyone. Until most people are vaccinated, the COVID-19 virus can still be passed around.
- Even after you get the vaccine, you need to follow public health guidelines:
  - wear a mask
  - wash or sanitize your hands often
  - stay 6 feet apart from other people, when possible
  - avoid crowds.

Notes

If you have questions, please talk to your doctor.

This information sheet is not intended to be a resource for people who require screening for COVID-19 or who are experiencing a mental health crisis. If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, please call 911 immediately or go to your nearest emergency department.

For more information, visit www.camh.ca/covid19

Adapted with permission from CAMH’s Azrieli Adult Neurodevelopmental Centre