

# COVID-19 Vaccine

## Immunization protects you from disease. Get protected, get immunized.

- Vaccines make your immune system stronger. They build antibodies to help prevent diseases.
- Immunization is safe. It is much safer to get immunized than to get this disease.

### What is the COVID-19 vaccine?

The COVID-19 vaccine protects against the SARS-CoV-2 virus (also known as COVID-19).

### Who should have the COVID-19 vaccine?

You should get the COVID-19 vaccine if you are age 16 years and older.

Everyone is at risk of COVID-19. The vaccine is very important for people who are more likely to be in contact with the virus because of where they work or live. This includes healthcare providers and people who live in a care facility, such as a nursing home.

It is also important for people who have a high risk of complications from COVID-19 to get this vaccine. This includes people who:

- have health problems such as heart, lung, kidney, or liver problems, high blood pressure, or diabetes
- have a lot of extra weight
- are over the age of 60

The vaccine is free and will be offered to everyone over the age of 16 years. The vaccine will be offered first to:

- those at high risk of getting very sick from COVID-19
- those who may spread disease to people at high risk
- essential workers, like frontline healthcare workers

Go to [ahs.ca/covidvaccine](https://ahs.ca/covidvaccine) to find out when you can get the COVID-19 vaccine.

### How many doses do I need?

You need 2 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. When you get the second dose depends on the vaccine supply at the time.

- If you live in a long-term care or supportive living facility, you should get your second dose 3 to 4 weeks after your first dose.
- For all others, you should get your second dose 3 to 6 weeks after your first dose.

Your healthcare provider will let you know when you need your second dose. You need to get both doses to make sure you have the best protection against COVID-19.

Visit [alberta.ca/covid19-vaccine.aspx](https://alberta.ca/covid19-vaccine.aspx) for more information.

### Are there different types of COVID-19 vaccines?

There are 2 COVID-19 vaccines available in Alberta. Other COVID-19 vaccines may be approved in the coming months. They all protect against the COVID-19 virus but they are made by different companies.

### How well does the vaccine work?

If you are healthy and get both doses, the protection for COVID-19 is about 94% to 95%, 7 to 14 days after you get the second dose.

It is still important to practice recommended public health measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, even if you have had the vaccine. This includes:

- following guidelines of when to wear a mask or other equipment that helps protect you
- washing your hands often
- staying 2 meters away from others
- staying home when you are sick (this means isolating)
- staying home for 14 days after having close contact with someone who has COVID-19 or after returning from travel outside of Canada (this means quarantining)

Visit [ahs.ca/covid](https://ahs.ca/covid) for more information, including information about isolation and quarantine.

### Where can I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Go to [ahs.ca/covidvaccine](https://ahs.ca/covidvaccine) to find out where and when you can get the COVID-19 vaccine.

## Are there side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine?

There can be side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine, but they tend to be mild and go away in a few days. Side effects may include:

- redness, swelling, or feeling sore where you had the needle
- feeling tired
- headache
- fever or chills
- body aches or sore joints
- feeling sick to your stomach (nausea), vomiting (throwing up), or loose stool (diarrhea)
- swollen lymph nodes

It is important to stay at the clinic for 15 minutes after your vaccine. Some people may have a rare but serious allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. If anaphylaxis happens, you will get medicine to treat the symptoms.

Wait at least 28 days after you have all doses of the COVID-19 vaccine before you:

- get another vaccine
- try to get pregnant

It is rare to have a serious side effect after a vaccine. Call Health Link at 811 to report any serious or unusual side effects.

## How can I manage side effects?

- To help with soreness and swelling, put a cool, wet cloth over the area where you had the needle.
- There is medicine to help with fever or pain. Check with your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure what medicine or dosage to take. Follow the directions on the package.
- Children under the age of 18 years should **not** take aspirin because it can cause serious health problems.

- Some people with health problems, such as a weak immune system, must call their doctor if they get a fever. If you have been told to do this, call your doctor even if you think the fever is from the vaccine.

## Who should not have the COVID-19 vaccine?

You may not be able to have the vaccine if you:

- have an allergy to parts of the vaccine
- had a severe or unusual side effect after this vaccine or one like it
- are under age 16 years
- have had another vaccine in the last 2 weeks

Check with your doctor or a public health nurse before you get the vaccine.

Talk to your doctor to find out if the vaccine is right for you if you:

- have a weak immune system (because of a medicine you take or a health problem)
- have an autoimmune disorder (like rheumatoid arthritis or lupus)
- are pregnant or breastfeeding

There is not enough evidence to know if the vaccine is safe and protects against COVID-19 in these groups.

Always tell your healthcare provider if you have allergies or if you have had a side effect from a vaccine in the past.

## For More Information



Call Health Link at **811**



Go to **ImmunizeAlberta.ca**



Go to **MyHealth.Alberta.ca**



Go to **ahs.ca/covidvaccine**

# Facts about COVID-19

## What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus responsible for a worldwide pandemic. The virus affects the lungs and airways (also called a respiratory illness). Symptoms may include:

- fever
- cough
- shortness of breath or trouble breathing
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose

Most people have only mild symptoms or no symptoms at all. But some people, such as seniors and adults with other health problems, can get very sick and may need care in a hospital. In serious cases, COVID-19 can cause a lung infection (called pneumonia), that makes it hard to breathe without help, and can even lead to death.

Go to [ahs.ca/covid](https://ahs.ca/covid) for a list of all symptoms that may be related to COVID-19.

## How does it spread?

COVID-19 spreads:

- when an infected person sneezes, coughs, or even talks
- if you breathe in the virus
- if you touch something that carries the virus like hands or a door knob, then touch your eyes, mouth, or nose

It is important to know that COVID-19 can spread before symptoms start.

## How can I prevent COVID-19 from spreading?

To prevent COVID-19 from spreading:

- get immunized
- wash your hands with warm water and soap or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer often
- do not touch your face, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands
- cover your cough or sneeze into your arm or a tissue, not your hand
- stay home when you are sick
- avoid close contact with people who are sick

If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 or have symptoms, take the COVID-19 Self-Assessment at [ahs.ca/testing](https://ahs.ca/testing).