



## Introduction

This document provides information to employers about COVID-19 vaccinations.

For general COVID-19 prevention practices, refer to the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) COVID-19 resources:

[Protect Yourself and Others from COVID-19](#), [COVID-19 Health and Safety Planning for Employers](#), and [COVID-19 Prevention for Workers](#).

Additional guidance about vaccines can be found in the CCOHS COVID-19 tip sheet [COVID-19 Vaccines](#) and [COVID-19 FAQ](#).

Employers need to take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances to protect the health and safety of their workers. Follow guidance from your local public health authority and jurisdictional health and safety regulator on public health measures, including [personal preventive practices](#) such as mask wearing and physical distancing.

## COVID-19 Vaccinations

One important measure to help prevent COVID-19 transmission is vaccination. Currently, vaccines are offered on a voluntary basis to anyone in Canada who would like to receive the vaccine and is 12 years and older.

There are four vaccines [approved](#) for use in Canada. They help our bodies develop an immune response to the virus that causes COVID-19.

The Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and AstraZeneca vaccines require two doses. Depending on the availability and distribution, individuals may need to wait 3 to 12 weeks before receiving a second dose.

People are considered fully vaccinated 2 weeks after their second dose of Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna or AstraZeneca vaccines.

For additional information on vaccines refer to the [Government of Canada website](#).

## Vaccine Effectiveness

For people who are fully vaccinated:

- The risk of serious illness is much lower (e.g., avoiding hospitalization).
- The risk of other people catching the virus from a fully immunized person is likely very low.
- The vaccine is likely to provide very good protection against infection, including against most current variants of concern. However there is a chance that people may not be completely protected from future variants.

About [5 out of every 100 people](#) could still get infected, even when fully vaccinated. Illness is more likely in those over 65 years of age, or who have underlying serious medical conditions. For additional information, please refer to the Government of Canada's website [Life After Vaccination](#).

Regardless of vaccination status, workers need to continue to follow local public health recommendations and restrictions both at work and when in public settings.

## Considerations for Employers

- Review policies and programs and consider whether vaccination is voluntary or mandatory. Involve stakeholders including human resources, health and safety committee representative, and the union (if applicable). If considering making vaccinations mandatory, can you demonstrate that a COVID-19 vaccination is a [bona fide occupational requirement](#)? Seek a legal opinion and consider other issues (e.g., medical reasons for not getting



vaccinated).

- Discuss the benefits of vaccination with your employees. For current information, please refer to the Government of Canada website, [Vaccines for COVID-19](#).
- Provide resources on [frequently asked questions](#) about vaccinations.
- Provide support for employees to attend local vaccination clinic appointments. Many provinces have passed legislation that provides employees with paid leave to get vaccinated during work hours. Make sure that the policies related to vaccination-related leave comply with the minimum requirements of the employment standards legislation in your jurisdiction. For additional details, contact the [Employment Standards Branch](#) in the province or territory in which the workplace is located.
- Host a vaccination clinic at the workplace.
- Provide support to employees (e.g., paid sick leave) who require an absence from work for experiencing [side effects](#) following a vaccination.
- Maintain [workplace COVID-19 controls](#), regardless of how many employees are vaccinated, until recommendations and restrictions are lifted by the local public health authority and [jurisdictional health and safety regulator](#).
- The Government of Canada recently mandated the implementation of COVID-19 vaccination policies which would require federal public servants, as well as employees in federally regulated air, rail and marine transportation sectors to be fully vaccinated (unless they have a valid exemption). Crown corporations and agencies are also being asked to implement vaccine policies mirroring the requirements for the public service. Other federally regulated workplaces (e.g. banking, telecommunications, road transportation) are encouraged to prioritize vaccination for workers in these sectors drawing on advice and guidance available from public health authorities. For more information, read the following backgrounders:
  - [COVID-19 vaccine requirement for the federal workforce](#)
  - [Mandatory COVID-19 vaccination requirements for federally regulated transportation employees and travellers](#)

**If you or someone you know is in crisis, please contact your local hospital, call 911 immediately, or contact a [Crisis Centre in your area](#).**



It is important that mental health resources and support are provided to all workers, including access to an employee assistance program, if available.

For further information on COVID-19, refer to the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#).

Note that this guidance is just some of the adjustments organizations can make during a pandemic. Adapt this list by adding your own good practices and policies to meet your organization's specific needs.

**Disclaimer:** As public and occupational health and safety information is changing rapidly, local public health authorities should be consulted for specific, regional guidance. This information is not intended to replace medical advice or legislated health and safety obligations. Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy, currency and completeness of the information, CCOHS does not guarantee, warrant, represent or undertake that the information provided is correct, accurate or current. CCOHS is not liable for any loss, claim, or demand arising directly or indirectly from any use or reliance upon the information.