

Immunization is one of the most important accomplishments in public health. Over the past 50 years, immunization has led to the elimination, containment and control of diseases that were once very common in Canada.¹ Vaccines help our immune system recognize and fight bacteria and viruses that cause diseases.

Novavax is a COVID-19 vaccine that can be given as a primary series (dose 1 and dose 2 for most people) or as a booster dose to adults aged 18 years and older. COVID-19 vaccine recommendations are different for people who are moderately to severely immunocompromised. If you are moderately to severely immunocompromised due to disease (e.g., organ transplant, leukemia, lymphoma) or treatment (e.g., chemotherapy, high-dose steroids), or have an autoimmune condition (e.g., Rheumatoid Arthritis, Multiple Sclerosis (MS)), refer to the factsheet titled, "COVID-19 Vaccine: Information for Individuals who have an Autoimmune Condition and/or are Immunocompromised" available at: manitoba.ca/covid19/vaccine/resources.html.

What is COVID-19?

Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases. COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, a virus in the coronavirus family. The virus that causes COVID-19 can spread from person to person through respiratory droplets and aerosols from someone infected with the virus. Respiratory droplets and aerosols are made when we do every day things like talk, cough, breathe, sneeze or sing. COVID-19 may also spread by touching something that has the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes with unwashed hands. Most people infected with the virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness, but the virus can affect different people in different ways. Some will become seriously ill and require medical attention.

Why should I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Vaccines play an important role in minimizing the impact of COVID-19 in the population, including significantly lowering the risk of being hospitalized. Vaccines are the best defense against the virus and individuals are encouraged to get vaccinated as soon as they are eligible, and receive the recommended number of doses for the best protection.

There are multiple COVID-19 vaccines approved and available in Canada.

The COVID-19 mRNA vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna) are the preferentially recommended COVID-19 vaccines. Information about the mRNA vaccines is available at manitoba.ca/covid19/vaccine/resources.html.

Novavax is a different type of COVID-19 vaccine that uses a well established manufacturing technology that has been used to make other vaccines (e.g., the hepatitis B vaccine). Novavax is a protein subunit vaccine that is approved and available in Canada. For information about how Novavax works, go to: canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/covid19-industry/drugs-vaccines-treatments/vaccines/protein-subunit.html.

Talk to your health care provider if you are unable or unwilling to receive one of the mRNA vaccines or Novavax.

¹ The Public Health Agency of Canada

Who can get Novavax and when should I get vaccinated?

Novavax may be offered to adults aged 18 years and older who are unable or unwilling to receive a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine as a first dose, a second dose, or as a booster dose. On December 6, 2022, Health Canada authorized the use of Novavax for the primary series in adolescents aged 12 to less than 18 years. However, this age group is not yet eligible in Manitoba, pending recommendations by the National Advisory Committee on Immunizations (NACI)².

Individuals without contraindications after dose 1 of any type of COVID-19 vaccine, are recommended to receive the second dose eight weeks after the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine. Individuals who wish to receive their second dose sooner than the recommended eight week interval may receive dose 2 as early as 28 days after dose 1. However, they should discuss the risks and benefits with their immunizer or health care provider before vaccination, to ensure they understand the risks of an earlier second dose. A longer time period between doses provides a stronger immune response.

People who previously received antibody products (anti-SARS-CoV-2 monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma) as part of COVID-19 treatment, post-exposure prophylaxis, or pre-exposure prophylaxis can be vaccinated at any time. COVID-19 vaccination does not need to be delayed following receipt of monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma. It is recommended to speak to your health care provider if you have questions about the best timing of vaccination after receiving an antibody product.

Individuals must complete their primary series of vaccine (dose 1 and dose 2 for most people), before they can receive a booster dose. It is recommended to wait six months from the last dose of COVID-19 vaccine before receiving a booster dose. However, eligible individuals can receive a booster dose a minimum of three months since their last dose, if they feel they are at increased risk. Booster doses may be given at least four months after the last COVID-19 vaccine. Information about booster doses of COVID-19 vaccine is available at: manitoba.ca/covid19/vaccine/resources.html and should be reviewed as part of the informed consent process for first and second booster doses.

You can get the COVID-19 vaccine at the same time as other (live or inactivated) vaccines.

Who should NOT get Novavax?

Anyone 17 years old or younger should not be given Novavax.

Anyone who is allergic to an active substance or any ingredients of Novavax vaccine, or if you have had a severe allergic reaction after the first dose of a protein subunit COVID-19 vaccine, should receive an allergy referral and assessment before receiving this vaccine product. An allergic reaction can be life-threatening. For information about any of the COVID-19 vaccine ingredients, please review the vaccine manufacturer's product monograph at manitoba.ca/covid19/vaccine/resources.html or speak with your health care provider.

Allergic reactions generally happen shortly after the vaccine is administered. **This is why you must be observed for a minimum of 15 minutes after immunization.**

You can be immunized if you have allergies not related to the vaccine, such as allergies to foods, insect stings or seasonal/environmental allergies. Talk to your immunizer or health care provider about all of your allergies before vaccination.

If you were infected with COVID-19 (e.g., confirmed by a positive PCR test or rapid antigen test (RAT)), you're recommended to wait six months after your infection before getting your next dose of vaccine. But at minimum, you need to wait until your symptoms are gone and recommended isolation period is over.

Possible side effects of Novavax

Health Canada conducted a rigorous scientific review of the available medical evidence to assess the safety of Novavax. Health Canada approved two-doses of Novavax for adults 18 years and older under normal regulatory processes on February 17, 2022 and approved use as a booster dose on November 23, 2022.

² NACI is a national advisory committee of experts in scientific, medical and public health fields that provides guidance on the use of vaccines in Canada.

Health Canada did not identify any major safety concerns during its assessment and approval process, and continues to monitor post-marketing studies.

In general, the side effects observed during the clinical trials were similar to those of other vaccines. The side effects were generally mild or moderate, and went away a few days after vaccination. They included:

- pain, redness and swelling at the site of injection
- body chills
- feeling tired and feverish
- headache
- muscle and joint pain
- nausea and vomiting

These are common side effects of the vaccines and are not a risk to your health. Over-the-counter medicines like acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (e.g., Advil®) may be considered to help manage these adverse events (like pain or fever, respectively), if they occur **after vaccination**.

For a full list of possible side effects, please review the vaccine manufacturer's product monograph at: manitoba.ca/covid19/vaccine/resources.html or speak with your health care provider.

The rare reaction of myocarditis/pericarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle/lining around the heart) has been reported following vaccination with Novavax/Nuvaxovid™ including in two teenage males shortly after receiving a second dose of the vaccine. Both teenage males fully recovered. Public health officials in Manitoba and Canada continue to closely monitor the situation. The signs and symptoms of myocarditis/pericarditis can include shortness of breath, chest pain, or the feeling of a rapid or abnormal heart rhythm. If you experience any of these symptoms, go to the nearest emergency department or health centre.

Serious allergic reactions are also possible following vaccination. In the unlikely event of a severe allergic reaction, it is important to stay in the immunization clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine. Symptoms of allergic reactions can include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. This can happen up to an hour after you get vaccinated. If this happens after you leave the immunization clinic, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department or health centre for immediate attention.

Report any serious or unexpected adverse reactions to a health care provider, or call Health Links – Info Santé at 204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257 (toll free in Manitoba).

Your record of protection

All immunizations, including the COVID-19 vaccine, are recorded on your immunization record in Manitoba's immunization registry. This registry:

- allows health care providers to find out which immunizations you (or the people you care for) have received or need to have.
- may be used to produce immunization records or notify you or your health care provider if a particular immunization has been missed.
- allows Manitoba Health and public health officials, to monitor how well vaccines work in preventing disease.

The Personal Health Information Act protects your information and the information for any people you provide care for. You can choose to have this personal health information hidden from health care providers. For additional information, please contact your local public health office or speak with a health care provider.

For information and to obtain your Manitoba Immunization Card, Manitoba immunization record or Pan-Canadian Proof of Vaccination Credential (PVC), go to: manitoba.ca/covid19/vaccine/immunizationrecord/residents.html

Where can I find more information?

For more information about COVID-19 or the COVID-19 vaccines, talk to your health care provider. You can also call Health Links – Info Santé in Winnipeg at **204-788-8200** or **1-888-315-9257** (toll free in Manitoba).

Or visit

Manitoba Government: manitoba.ca/covid19/index.html

Government of Canada: canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html
