



## SARS-CoV-2 Vaccines (COVID-19)

### What is COVID-19?

**COVID-19 is an infectious disease** caused by a coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). COVID-19 was recognized for the first time in December 2019 and has since spread around the world to cause a pandemic. The virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly passed from an infected person to others when the infected person coughs, sneezes, sings, talks or breathes. It is important to note that infected people can spread the infection even if they have no symptoms.

**Symptoms can vary from person to person** and depending on the COVID-19 variant. Some people experience no symptoms at all, while others have symptoms that range from mild to severe. Even with mild symptoms, you may feel unwell for a long time after a COVID-19 infection. The most commonly reported symptoms can include any of the following: new or worsening cough; sore throat, runny nose, shortness of breath or trouble breathing; fever; headache; fatigue; muscle or body aches; diarrhea; loss of smell or taste; headache.

### What are COVID-19 Vaccines and what are their benefits?

**COVID-19 vaccines protect against the SARS-CoV-2 virus.** Vaccines work with your immune system, so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. Vaccination is one of the most effective ways to protect our families, communities and ourselves against severe illness, hospitalization, long-COVID or death from COVID-19. Hybrid immunity means you have received both vaccination and infection, creating an extra layer of protection but wanes over time. Unvaccinated people are at much higher risk.

After your primary series, booster doses help “boost” your immune response and extend your protection. A bivalent booster product protects against both the original COVID-19 virus and the Omicron variant.

**As of June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023**, the following mRNA COVID-19 vaccines are available in New-Brunswick and approved for use:

- Original (also called a monovalent vaccine): Pfizer Comirnaty
- Bivalent mRNA vaccines: Moderna Spikevax Bivalent Original/Omicron BA.4/5 and Pfizer Comirnaty Original/Omicron BA.4/5

### How is the vaccine given?

The vaccine is given as an injection into the upper arm in older children and adults and into the thigh in infants.

### Who should get a COVID-19 vaccine?

**Everyone is at risk of an infection with COVID-19.** It is recommended that individuals aged 6 months and older receive their COVID-19 vaccines.

### Can I get my vaccine at the same time as my Flu shot or other non-COVID vaccines?

**Yes.** COVID-19 vaccines can be safely given at the same time as other vaccines if you are aged 6 months and over. This means fewer vaccine appointments and ensures you or your child are protected sooner.

### How many doses of a COVID-19 vaccine do I need to be considered up to date?

**It remains important to stay up to date** with your COVID-19 vaccinations to reduce their risk of severe outcomes of the disease given the continued circulation of variants in Canada and elsewhere.

For the latest information on booster eligibility, visit [COVID-19 vaccines \(gnb.ca\)](https://www.gnb.ca) or consult your healthcare provider, local pharmacist, or Public Health office. General recommendations:

- **Healthy infants aged 6 months to under 5 years:** 3 primary series doses of Pfizer Comirnaty vaccine, spaced 8 weeks apart. No boosters needed.
- **Healthy individuals aged 5 years and over:** 2 primary series doses, spaced 8 weeks apart. Boosters may be recommended.
- **Individuals aged 65 years and over:** 2 primary series doses, spaced 8 weeks apart. Boosters are recommended.
- **Individuals living in Long Term Care Facilities:** 2 primary series doses, spaced 8 weeks apart. Boosters are recommended.
- **Moderately to severely immunocompromised individuals:** An additional 3rd dose in the primary series is recommended, with all doses spaced 4 to 8 weeks apart. Boosters are recommended.
- **If you received a COVID-19 vaccine not approved by Health Canada** and/or the World Health Organization, you are not considered up to date. You may need 1 or 2 additional doses for full protection.
- **Depending on your age or health situation,** certain mRNA vaccine products may be recommended over others. Consult your healthcare provider, local pharmacy, or Public Health office for advice on the appropriate vaccine for your health situation.

### Should you get a COVID-19 vaccine after having a COVID-19 infection?

**Yes. Vaccination after a COVID infection is important.** The combination of having been infected and also being vaccinated (called hybrid immunity) provides strong protection against new variants. To optimize the immune response, individuals should time and space their next vaccine dose based on the time of infection:

- If you haven't started or are in the middle of your primary series, wait at least 8 weeks (4 weeks for immunocompromised individuals) after the infection before receiving the next dose.
- If you have completed your primary series, wait 5 months from either your last vaccine dose or the date of your COVID-19 infection (whichever is more recent) before getting the booster dose.

### What are the possible common side effects of the vaccine?

It is possible to experience common side effects in the days following vaccination. While most side effects are generally mild and temporary, they might make you feel unwell for a short period and go away on their own.

COVID-19 vaccines do not cause COVID-19 infection. Some more common and expected side effects include one or more of the following: pain, redness or swelling where the needle was given, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, joint pain, chills, fever. To reduce discomfort:

- Apply a cold compress at the injection site.
- Take or give your child medicine for discomfort or fever by following the manufacturer's instruction.. Ask your healthcare provider what medicine is best.

### Are there any serious side effects to the vaccines?

**COVID-19 vaccines are safe,** effectiveness and meet the quality standards of Health Canada before being approved. After they are approved, vaccines continue to be closely monitored to help ensure their safe use. The benefits of all COVID-19 vaccines continue to outweigh the risks of the disease.

Allergic reactions, although rare, can occur after receiving a vaccine, just like with any other vaccines. Symptoms of an allergic reaction include hives (bumps on the skin that are often very itchy), swelling of your face, tongue or throat, or difficulty breathing. The clinic staff are prepared to manage an allergic reaction should it occur. Seek immediate medical care if you develop any of these symptoms.

Other very rare reactions reported after getting an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine include:

- Anaphylaxis
- Myocarditis and pericarditis (inflammation of the heart or lining on the outside of the heart)
- Bell's palsy (facial paralysis)

### Can I receive a COVID-19 vaccine if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?

**Yes**, pregnant women are at a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. By getting vaccinated against COVID-19, you reduce this risk. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding and have questions about getting a COVID-19 vaccine, talk to your healthcare provider.

### I am allergic to a component of the vaccine being offered to me, what should I do?

**Depending on your allergy**, it is still possible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

- You may be asked to wait longer in the clinic after receiving the vaccine
- You may be able to receive another COVID-19 vaccine product.
- Discuss your options with your health care provider to determine the most appropriate actions for your situation.

### How do I obtain a record of my COVID-19 Immunizations?

**Register online at [MyHealthNB.gnb.ca](https://myhealthnb.gnb.ca)** to obtain a record of all your COVID-19 immunizations. The paper record of COVID-19 Immunization provided when vaccinated will continue to be the official record. Keep your immunization record in a safe place.

- If the information on your record is incorrect **or** you received immunizations outside of New Brunswick and want them added, you can send an email to [immunizationrecordupdates@gnb.ca](mailto:immunizationrecordupdates@gnb.ca).

### Where do I get additional information?

For additional information visit [Living with COVID-19 \(gnb.ca\)](https://livingwithcovid19.gnb.ca), contact your primary health care provider, your pharmacy, your local [Public Health office](#), or Telecare by dialing **811**.