COVID-19 Vaccine: Booster Doses

Information for people 5 years of age and older

Public Health Factsheet
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Manitoba

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.

Information in this factsheet is specifically about booster doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

COVID-19 vaccine recommendations are different for people who are considered 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), refer to the factsheet titled, "COVID-19 Vaccine: Information for Individuals who have an autoimmune condition or are immunocompromised" available at manitoba.ca/covid19/vaccine/resources.html.

Who should get a booster dose and how many booster doses should they get?

Evidence suggests that the protection provided by two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine decreases over time. A booster dose is offered to restore protection that may have decreased over time. Based on risk of experiencing serious illness from COVID-19 infection, there are different recommendations on who should receive a first booster dose and who should receive additional booster doses. Information about Manitoba's current booster dose eligibility, as well as links to the recommendations from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI)[2] are available online at www.manitoba.ca/covid19/vaccine/ eligibility-criteria.html. Over time and with the Omicron variant, the primary vaccine series (dose 1 and dose 2 for most people) of COVID-19 vaccine becomes less effective at preventing mild illness, and we also see reduced protection against severe illness, mostly among those at increased risk of serious illness. In assessing the individual risks and benefits of getting booster doses, consider:

- **your risk of getting sick from COVID-19 and experiencing complications.** Emerging evidence suggests that overall, the risk of serious illness from Omicron is lower compared to other variants of concern. However, some groups of people continue to be at increased risk of experiencing serious illness from Omicron. Evidence suggests protection from the vaccine decreases with time.
- **your risk as it pertains to vaccine safety** (e.g., limited evidence of rare cases of myocarditis/pericarditis following booster doses).
- **what is unknown at this time.** It is unknown what future variants of concern may emerge, if and when they will circulate in Canada and how current vaccines will work against them. Vaccine manufacturers are working on new COVID-19 vaccines, but it is unknown if and when these will be available, and how they will work against current or new variants of concern.
- **the evolving and limited evidence on the effectiveness of a booster dose.** In general, protection from a booster dose against Omicron is highest soon after vaccination, with protection decreasing over time.
    - Evidence of a first booster dose suggests that while protection against mild illness begins to decrease after vaccination, protection against severe illness remains more durable.
    - Evidence of additional booster doses is limited but suggests that it provides additional protection compared to a first booster dose, including against severe disease. However, it is currently unknown how long protection will last.

[1] The Public Health Agency of Canada

[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.

What COVID-19 vaccine should I get for the booster dose?

There are 2 types of booster doses available in Manitoba:

1. **Monovalent (Pfizer/Comirnaty™ and Moderna/Spikevax™)** are the original mRNA vaccines which were designed to protect against the initial strain of the COVID-19 virus.
    - Everyone 12 years of age and older is eligible to receive a monovalent booster dose of COVID-19 vaccine. For this age group, either mRNA vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna) can be given, regardless of the COVID-19 vaccines previously received.
    - Children 5 to 11 years of age are eligible to receive a monovalent booster dose of COVID-19 vaccine. For this age group, the Pfizer/Comirnaty™ vaccine is the only authorized booster dose. A booster dose is particularly important for children with an underlying medical condition that places them at high risk of severe illness due to COVID-19.
2. **Bivalent (Moderna/Spikevax™ Bivalent (Original/Omicron)** has been developed to protect against the original strain of COVID-19 as well as an omicron variant. This type of vaccine provides a broader immune response and may also protect against future variants of concern.
    - Health Canada has approved the use of the Moderna/Spikevax™ Bivalent (Original/Omicron) vaccine as a booster dose for individuals 18 years of age and older.
    - It is recommended that all adults receive a bivalent booster dose as soon as they are eligible since this vaccine protects against multiple strains of the COVID-19 virus.

To view current eligibility criteria for the Moderna/Spikevax™ Bivalent (Original/Omicron) vaccine please visit: https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/vaccine/eligibility-criteria.html

Novavax/Nuvaxovid™ may also be given to individuals who are unable or unwilling to receive a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine (Pfizer/Comirnaty™ or Moderna/Spikevax™). A booster dose of Novavax/Nuvaxovid™ is not approved by Health Canada at this time. NACI cites evidence that using Novavax/Nuxaxovid™ as a first booster dose among adults is safe. No evidence is available on the safety or effectiveness of using Novavax/Nuvaxovid™ as a subsequent booster dose.

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

When should I get a booster dose of COVID-19 vaccine?

Individuals must complete their primary series of vaccine (dose 1 and dose 2 for most people), before they can receive a booster dose. To receive either the monovalent or bivalent vaccine, it is recommended to wait six months from the last dose of COVID-19 vaccine. 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.

It is recommended for individuals to wait 6 months since their last COVID-19 infection. At minimum, they need to be fully recovered and completed their isolation period before receiving a booster dose.

For most people, the first booster dose is the third dose of vaccine. However, a different immunization schedule is recommended for individuals who are considered moderately to severely immunocompromised. If you're moderately to severely immunocompromised because of a disease or treatment or have an autoimmune condition, refer to the factsheet titled, "COVID-19 Vaccine: Information for Individuals who have an autoimmune condition or are immunocompromised" available at manitoba.ca/covid19/vaccine/resources.html.

Possible side effects of a booster dose of COVID-19 vaccine

Available data does not indicate any new or worsening side effects or rare reactions following administration of COVID-19 mRNA vaccine booster doses (compared to what was seen following administration of dose 1 and dose 2). Data on the risk of myocarditis/pericarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle/lining around the heart) following a first booster dose with an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine suggests a lower risk than what has been seen following dose 2. Data on the risk of myocarditis/pericarditis following a second booster dose with an mRNA vaccine is limited but suggests it is comparable to previous doses. Refer to the appropriate COVID-19 vaccine factsheet for information on possible side-effects and details on who should NOT get a COVID-19 vaccine, available at manitoba.ca/covid19/vaccine/resources.html

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 of whom you take care. 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)

Visit the Manitoba government website at manitoba.ca/covid19/index.html

Visit the Government of Canada website at canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html