

# COVID-19 Vaccine Safety

January 2021

## Vaccines save lives

- Vaccines are one of the best ways to stop the spread of infectious diseases like COVID-19.
- Vaccines help us protect ourselves, our families, and others around us.
- COVID-19 vaccine can help us make our communities safer, start to resume our normal lives and end the pandemic.

## Vaccine Safety

- COVID-19 vaccines are **safe and effective**. They have been fully tested, evaluated and reviewed. A vaccine is only approved by Health Canada if it is safe, it works, it meets manufacturing standards, and the benefits outweigh any risks.
- Vaccine is given by a needle in the upper arm, similar to a flu shot. **You cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine.** It does not contain the actual virus.
- **People who are vaccinated may experience mild side effects.** They are minimal for most people (localized pain, redness or swelling at the injection site, mild fever or headache) and should go away in a few days.
- Worldwide, **tens of millions of people have already received COVID-19 vaccine.** Adverse reactions are uncommon and are always tracked, monitored and reported by public health. In Canada, only a handful of unexpected reactions have been reported. [potential hyperlink: <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/covid-19/vaccine-safety/>]
- People who previously had COVID-19 should still be vaccinated, as long as they have recovered. This is because they are often vulnerable to illness, and there is not yet clear evidence on how long they may have immunity. They do not have to wait 90 days to be vaccinated.
- If a person gets COVID-19, they should delay vaccination until they have recovered.
- If someone receives vaccine and then tests positive, they were likely exposed in the previous 14 days and were in the incubation period. COVID vaccines are not live vaccines and cannot cause the disease. The person's second dose would be delayed until they recover.
- **Vaccination is voluntary**, but is important to help keep individuals, loved ones and communities safer from COVID-19. Our most vulnerable people can be protected by “**herd immunity**”, which is when widespread immunity to an infectious disease develops in a population.
- Even after COVID-19 vaccination, we all need to continue masking, hand-washing and physical distancing. **Public Health Orders and safety measures must still be followed.** Building up immunity takes time.

## More Information

- Saskatchewan's COVID-19 pandemic response: [Saskatchewan.ca/COVID19](https://saskatchewan.ca/COVID19)
- Canada's vaccination process: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/awareness-resources/know-vaccine.html>
- Information in English, French, Cree, Dene, Michif and other languages can be found at [Canada.ca](https://Canada.ca).

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## The Science

- Scientists all over the world have worked on developing and testing COVID-19 vaccines.
- The technology was recently applied to this situation, but the work has been going on for years.
- Approved COVID-19 vaccines use “messenger RNA” to make the body produce antibodies to fight the virus. It is not DNA, and has no effect on a person’s genes. It only triggers the body’s immune response, to help it get ready to fight the virus.
- Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are **95% effective** in preventing people from getting COVID-19. **Two doses are required** for highest effectiveness.
- There have been no shortcuts taken in developing COVID-19 vaccines. They have gone through all the necessary steps. Clinical trials began March 1, 2020 and have involved many thousands of people. Scientific validation and thorough, independent reviews followed.
- Development of COVID-19 vaccines was done more quickly because of unprecedented worldwide funding and collaboration due to the pandemic.
- Canada has real-time access to manufacturer clinical data for promising COVID-19 vaccines being developed. Health Canada fast-tracks approvals by reviewing data as it comes in – instead of waiting until all the data is in to start to review it.
- There is a lot of misinformation circulating about the vaccine – including that COVID-19 vaccines contain human or animal cells. They do not. Make sure to seek information from credible, science-based sources.

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