

# ALGOMA COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION BULLETIN

Release: April 16, 2021

## Vaccine Overview

### Key Reminders

The COVID-19 vaccines are free for everyone and can be accessed at designated clinics across Algoma and Ontario. For people without a health card, government-issued photo ID, such as a driver's license, passport, Status Card, etc., can be used. You cannot show up for a vaccine without an appointment. Eligibility for vaccine is assessed when booking.

What to bring to your appointment:

- Government-issued ID verifying date of birth
- Health Care Worker employee identification, if applicable
- Status Card, Métis citizenship card, beneficiary card or self-identification, if applicable
- ONE support person, if required

Someone who would like to receive a COVID-19 should consult with their own health care provider, if they:

- are pregnant, want to become pregnant soon after vaccination, or breastfeeding;
- have a autoimmune disorder or weakened immune system due to illness or treatment

Once vaccinated, **everyone must continue following the advice of public health officials** to prevent COVID-19 from spreading in our communities. The Algoma Public Health Vaccine Info Page will be updated with clinic information and movement through phases as they happen: [www.algomapublichealth.com/vaccineclinics](http://www.algomapublichealth.com/vaccineclinics)

## Available COVID-19 Vaccines

### Vaccine Safety

Health Canada only authorizes vaccines in Canada after a thorough and independent review of the scientific evidence. The safety of vaccines is carefully monitored, starting early in the product development and continuing for as long as the vaccine is being used. Health Canada's independent drug authorization process is recognized around the world for its high standards and rigorous review and decisions are based only on scientific and medical evidence showing that vaccines are safe and effective.

#### What vaccines for COVID-19 are approved by Health Canada?

##### 1. Pfizer-BioNTech

- Approved for people 16 years of age and older
- **mRNA vaccine** (uses mRNA that contains the instructions for your cells to create the spike protein found on the surface of the COVID-19 virus, without actually causing infection)
- **2 doses:** NACI recommends that in the context of limited COVID-19 vaccine supply extending the interval for the second dose of the vaccine to 4 months
  - Residents of long-term care homes, retirement homes, and elder care lodges will continue to receive vaccine at the 21 day interval
- 95% effective in preventing COVID-19 starting 1 week after the second dose.

##### 2. Moderna

- Approved for people age 18 years of age and older
- **mRNA vaccine** (uses mRNA that contains the instructions for your cells to create the spike protein found on the surface of the COVID-19 virus, without actually causing infection)

## In this bulletin:

- Vaccine Overview
- Available COVID-19 Vaccines
- Phases 1-3 & Priority Groups
- Local Clinics Across Algoma
- FAQ's About COVID-19 Vaccines

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- **2 doses:** NACI recommends that in the context of limited COVID-19 vaccine supply extending the interval for the second dose of the vaccine to 4 months
  - Residents of long-term care homes, retirement homes, and elder care lodges will continue to receive vaccine at the 28 day interval
- 94% effective in preventing COVID-19 starting 2 weeks after the second dose

### 3. AstraZeneca

- Approved for people 55 years of age and older
- **Non-replicating viral-vector based vaccine** (uses a harmless virus [i.e. adenovirus] as a delivery system)
- **2 doses:** NACI recommends that in the context of limited COVID-19 vaccine supply extending the interval for the second dose of the vaccine to 4 months
- 62% effective in preventing symptomatic COVID-19 illness starting 2 weeks after the second dose

**Notice:** Both doses should be the SAME vaccine. (i.e. mRNA and mRNA, NOT mRNA and viral-vector based).

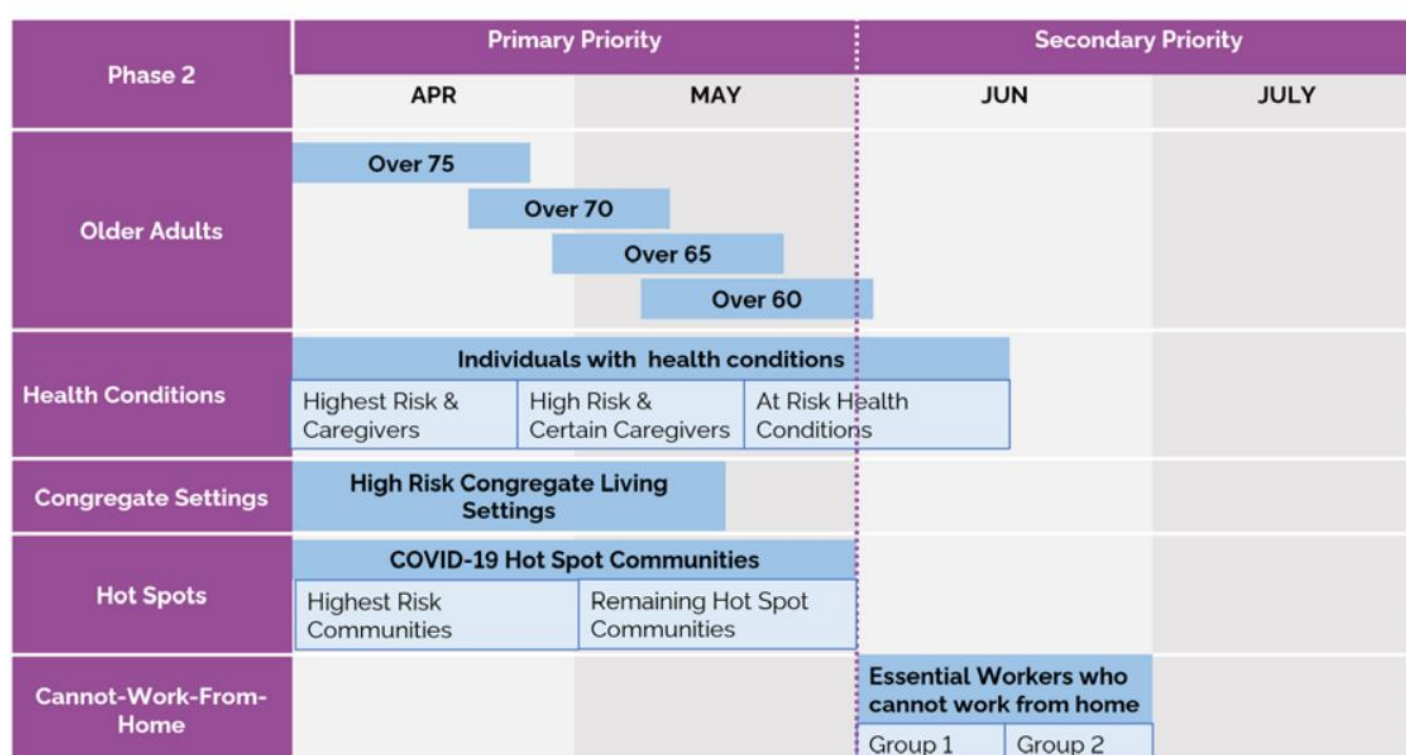
## Phases 1-3 and Priority Groups

### Vaccine Safety

Ontario has a three-phase plan that prioritizes vaccines for those at greatest risk of severe illness and those who care for them. As vaccine supply is delivered across the province, public health units may have different vaccine administration rates based on local context. The federal and provincial government designates the approach and these groups chosen as first priority.

At this time, Algoma Public Health has provided the first round of vaccines to our Long-Term Care Home residents and First Nation Elder Lodges. Until vaccines are widely available, it remains important to take steps to protect yourself, your loved ones and our community against COVID-19. This includes staying home as much as possible, keep two metres (six feet) distance from others, wearing your mask and washing your hands often. Algoma Public Health is currently in Phase 1 of Ontario's 3 Phase Vaccination Distribution Plan.

**Projected Timing of Phase 2 Sequence**



All timelines subject to vaccine supply availability

### Phase 1 Priority Groups:

- Adults over 80 years old
- Residents, staff, and registered essential caregivers in **congregate living centers for seniors** (i.e. LTCH/RH)
- Health Care Workers (hospital employees, staff who work or study in hospitals and health care personnel)
- Adults in First Nations, Métis and Inuit populations
- Adult recipients of **chronic home health care**

### Phase 2 Priority Groups:

- Older Adults aged 60 to 79, decreasing in 5-year increments
- High-risk congregate care settings – (such as shelters, community living)
- Individuals with high-risk chronic conditions and their caregivers
- Front line essential workers – first responders, teachers/other education staff, and the food processing industry.
- Other populations and communities facing barriers related to health determinants across Ontario (i.e. homeless).

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## Phase 3 Priority Groups:

- Remaining Ontarians in the general population who wish to be vaccinated
- Adults 16 to 59 years, decreasing in 5-year increments

## Local Clinics Across Algoma

### Find a clinic near you

Vaccinations are being administered across Algoma. Please book an appointment at a clinic local to you.

### Pharmacies:

- The Province of Ontario has supplied select pharmacies in Algoma with the AstraZeneca vaccine available by appointment only:
  - Elliot Lake – Shopper’s Drug Mart → (705)-848-7125 | <http://www.shoppersdrugmart.ca/Covid19>
  - Sault Ste. Marie – Pharmasave West End → (705)-450-2622 | <https://westendpharmasave.medmeapp.ca/schedule>
  - Sault Ste. Marie – Rome’s your Independent Grocer Pharmacy → (705)-253-2887 | <http://www.yourindependentgrocer.ca/covid19>

### Central & East Algoma:

- If you are a patient of a local primary care provider, please call your “home” primary care provider to book an appointment:
  - Desbarats → Residents are encouraged to book their appointment through the Richards Landing or Thessalon clinics.
  - Richards Landing Medical Clinic → (705)-246-2477
  - Richards Landing Legion Hall Immunization Clinic → (705)-246-2625 ext. 201
  - Bruce Mines Medical Clinic → (705)-785-3495
  - The North channel Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic → (705)-842-9898
  - Thessalon Medical Clinic → (705)-842-2905
  - Thessalon First Nation Health Centre → (705)-842-2670
- If you are not a patient of one of the local primary care clinics listed above but would like to book an appointment:
  - Richards Landing Legion Hall Immunization Clinic → (705)-842-9696
- Blind River → (705)-356-1666, ext. 270
- Iron Bridge → (705)-356-2551, ext. 5010

### Elliot Lake & Area:

- Elliot Lake → (705)-461-8882, ext. 611
- Spanish → (705)-356-2551, ext. 5010

### North Algoma:

- Dubreuilville → (705)-884-2884
- Wawa → (705)-914-0464
- White River → 1-(807)-822-2320

### Sault Ste. Marie & Area:

- Batchewana Health Centre → (705) 254-7827
- Indian Friendship Centre and Maamwesying North Shore Community Health Services → (705)-256-5634
- Sault Ste. Marie – GFL Memorial Gardens → (705)-541-2332

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# Frequently Asked Questions

## About the Vaccine(s)

### How does an mRNA vaccine work?

mRNA vaccines teach our cells how to make a protein from the virus that will trigger an immune response and create antibodies. These antibodies help us fight the infection if the real virus does enter our body in the future as they recognize this protein.

### How does a viral-vector vaccine work?

These vaccines use genetically modified viruses (vectors) that are harmless to humans. Once injected into the body, the viral vector contained in the vaccine produces a part of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, such as its spike protein. The vector virus is not the virus that causes COVID-19 and doesn't make you sick.

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

Mild to moderate symptoms of fatigue, headache, muscle pain, chills, fever, redness/soreness/swelling at the site of the injection - adverse effects are more common after the 2nd dose. Signs and symptoms following vaccination may represent side effects from (a) the vaccine or (b) COVID-19 illness. COVID-19 testing should be used to distinguish vaccine side effect from COVID-19 illness.

### What is the risk of blood clots (Vaccine-Induced Prothrombotic Immune Thrombocytopenia or VPIT) and the AstraZeneca vaccine?

AstraZeneca remains a **safe and effective vaccine** for reducing severe illness, hospitalization, and death. Health Canada encourages eligible individuals to get immunized with any authorized vaccine. At the time of writing this, adults 55 years of age and older who meet provincial eligibility requirements are able to receive the AstraZeneca vaccine. Occurrences of **VPIT are very rare**, and the AstraZeneca vaccine is very effective at reducing severe illness.

#### Clotting Risk Explained:

- **Very rare cases** of serious blood clots associated with low levels of blood platelets following vaccination have been reported in Europe
- As a precautionary measure, while Health Canada carries out an updated benefit/risk analysis based on emerging data, NACI recommends that the vaccine not be offered to adults under the age of 55
- Cases identified so far have been primarily in women under the age of 55 years; although cases in men have also been reported and have mostly occurred between 4 and 16 days after receipt of vaccine
- This adverse event has not been identified following receipt of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines to date.

## Booking an Appointment

### I fall under Phase 1 but a new Phase has opened up, am I still eligible to receive a vaccine?

All persons from previously prioritized groups will remain eligible once a new category is opened. Ex. When Phase 3 opens, those 80+ will still be able to receive a vaccine.

### When booking appointments run out, why aren't more appointments added faster?

Vaccine demand in Algoma continues to exceed the supply of vaccine allocated to our region. Limited vaccine supply means that not everyone who is eligible will be able to book an appointment right away. The vaccine clinics are scheduled based on the number of doses available. Once we receive an allocation of doses, we determine the number of days a clinic can be open based on how many vaccinations can be administered each day. If you do not receive an appointment for the upcoming clinic, do not panic. As more doses become available, more dates will become available.

### Why is Algoma lagging behind other parts of the province? Why are we not vaccinating the same groups as Toronto?

According to provincial reporting, Algoma has vaccinated a relatively comparable percentage of residents when compared to the Ontario average. **We are doing well in Algoma.** There are over 20 booking systems across Ontario. When the province changes their booking criteria for the provincial system, this **does not** apply to all regions. How quickly we vaccinate and can book appointments depends on the vaccine we are allotted each week. As more vaccine continues to arrive, more clinics will be made available for bookings in the near future.

### How long does someone have to wait, after they have had COVID-19, to receive their COVID-19 vaccine?

Someone who has had an active COVID infection should **wait until they are symptom-free and cleared from isolation** prior to receiving the vaccine. There is some evidence to suggest that natural immunity from a COVID-19 illness may not last very long, so encourage previous/current cases to seek vaccination when they are eligible.

### What do I do if I have no Family Care Provider?

You do not need a family care provider to be eligible for a vaccine. APH fully recognizes that not everyone has a primary care provider, and will be planning for ways for individuals to access immunization. At this point, we do not yet have any pre-registration system in place for Phase 2 groups (only Phase 1). Once booking does become available for Phase 2, this will be widely disseminated publicly via news release, etc. There will be multiple locations to receive a vaccine – primary care providers are only 1 of many options.

## Pre-existing or Current Medical Conditions

### Should I get vaccinated if I have an existing health condition? (i.e. Diabetes, High Blood Pressure, Stable Hepatitis B or C, HIV)

**Yes** – get the vaccine. People with stable health conditions may be vaccinated with the vaccine as long as they are **NOT** on medications that weaken your immune system.

### If I have an Autoimmune Condition/ Immunocompromised (due to disease or treatment), can I get vaccinated?

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Individuals who are immunocompromised due to disease or treatment may still receive vaccine. You should consult with your treating health care provider to discuss timing of immunization in relation to your treatment.

#### Should I get vaccinated if I am Pregnant or Breastfeeding?

**Yes** – get the vaccine. People with stable health conditions may be vaccinated with the vaccine as long as they are **NOT** on medications that weaken your immune system. You should have a conversation with your own health care provider if; you are pregnant, want to become pregnant soon after vaccination, or are breastfeeding.

#### Can I receive a vaccine if I'm an essential caregiver for my mother/father? (E.g. Daughter/Son caring for 80+ parents in their home environment.)

Not at this time. Our public health unit is only allocated so much vaccine for all of Algoma. To ensure our most vulnerable populations receive a vaccine first. Continue to follow all public health measures and look for updates from APH on which populations will be receiving the vaccine next. Your turn will come.

#### I have a chronic health condition. Am I eligible for vaccination in Phase 2?

You will not be asked for verification or proof of your pre-existing health condition. Priority of vaccination is based on people most at risk and available vaccination times will open for highest-risk populations first. An announcement will be made during Phase II for booking.

**Highest-Risk Health Conditions:** Organ transplant recipients, hematopoietic stem cell transplant recipients, neurological diseases in which respiratory function may be compromised (i.e. motor neuron disease, myasthenia gravis, MS), hematological malignancy diagnosed less than 1 year ago, and kidney disease.

**High-Risk Health Conditions:** Obesity (BMI over 40), other treatments causing immunosuppression (i.e. chemo, immunity-weakening medications), and intellectual or developmental disabilities (i.e. Down Syndrome).

**At-Risk Health Conditions:** Immune deficiencies/autoimmune disorders, stroke/cerebrovascular disease, dementia, diabetes, liver disease, all other cancers, respiratory disease, spleen problems, heart disease, hypertension with end organ damage, diagnosis of mental health disorder, substance use disorder, sickle cell disease, thalassemia, pregnancy, immunocompromising health conditions, and other disabilities requiring direct support care in the community.

**Reminder:** Immunocompromised or pregnant individuals should consult with their own health care provider.

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