

What to expect when you get vaccinated

Health Canada has authorized 4 vaccines against COVID-19 for use in Canada, as of April 21, 2021

- [Moderna COVID-19 vaccine](#)
- [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine](#)
- [AstraZeneca / COVIDSHIELD COVID-19 vaccine](#)
- [Janssen \(Johnson & Johnson\) COVID-19 vaccine](#)

Vaccines work by telling your immune system to build a defense to the virus.

For vaccines that require two doses, the first dose triggers your body to react and start building protection. The second dose boosts your immune system, building protection for a full and lasting benefit.

Vaccines that require a single dose, trigger your body to react and start building protection for a full and lasting benefit after the single dose.

Most side effects are a sign of a healthy immune system building that defense.

All COVID-19 vaccines will continue to be monitored for safety and effectiveness as long as they are authorized for use in Canada.

Possible common side effects

- pain and/or swelling at injection site
- tiredness
- headache
- muscle pain or stiffness
- chills
- joint pain
- fever
- enlarged lymph nodes (less common, 1 in 100 people are affected)
- nausea or vomiting (specific to Moderna)

You may feel unwell from these side effects for a day or two after getting the vaccine. These side effects may impact your ability to carry out your normal activities for a few days.

Side effects are generally non-serious and resolve on their own in a few days. Serious side effects, such as anaphylactic reactions, are uncommon and closely watched for.

Talk to your healthcare provider if you have any concerns, or if your side effects are serious, worsen or do not go away after a few days.

Allergic reactions

People with known serious allergic reactions to vaccines, drugs or foods should speak to their health provider before receiving a COVID-19 vaccine.



Allergic (anaphylactic) reactions are **very rare**. Symptoms of an allergic reaction include:

- hives (bumps on the skin that are often very itchy)
- swelling of the face, tongue or throat
- difficulty breathing

Anaphylaxis generally happens within the first 15-30 minutes of receiving an immunization. That's why people are asked to wait in the clinic for observation. If an anaphylaxis reaction occurs, then the person is immediately treated with epinephrine and given further medical attention.

Call **911** right away if you develop any serious symptoms after vaccination or symptoms that could be an allergic reaction.

Second dose side effects

For vaccines that require two doses, stronger reactions are more common with the second dose and tends to be more common in younger individuals with a strong immune system. This is an expected and known potential side effect.

To get the full possible protection you need to get both doses of the vaccine. Tell your healthcare provider if you had any reaction to the first dose.

How to relieve side effects

- Put something cold on the injection site
- Drink lots of fluids
- Talk with your health care provider about taking ibuprofen, aspirin or acetaminophen

After you are vaccinated

It isn't yet known whether the spread of COVID-19 can be stopped by vaccination alone. Because of this, it's essential that everyone continue to follow public health measures to help stop the spread of COVID-19 in our communities.

Learn more about [preventative practices to limit the spread of COVID-19](#).

Related links

- [Vaccine safety, concerns and possible side effects](#)
- [Vaccines for COVID-19: Authorized vaccines](#)
- [mRNA vaccines](#)
- [Viral vector-based vaccines](#)
- [Vaccines for COVID-19: What to expect at your vaccination](#)

