COVID-19 Vaccination
STAYING UP TO DATE
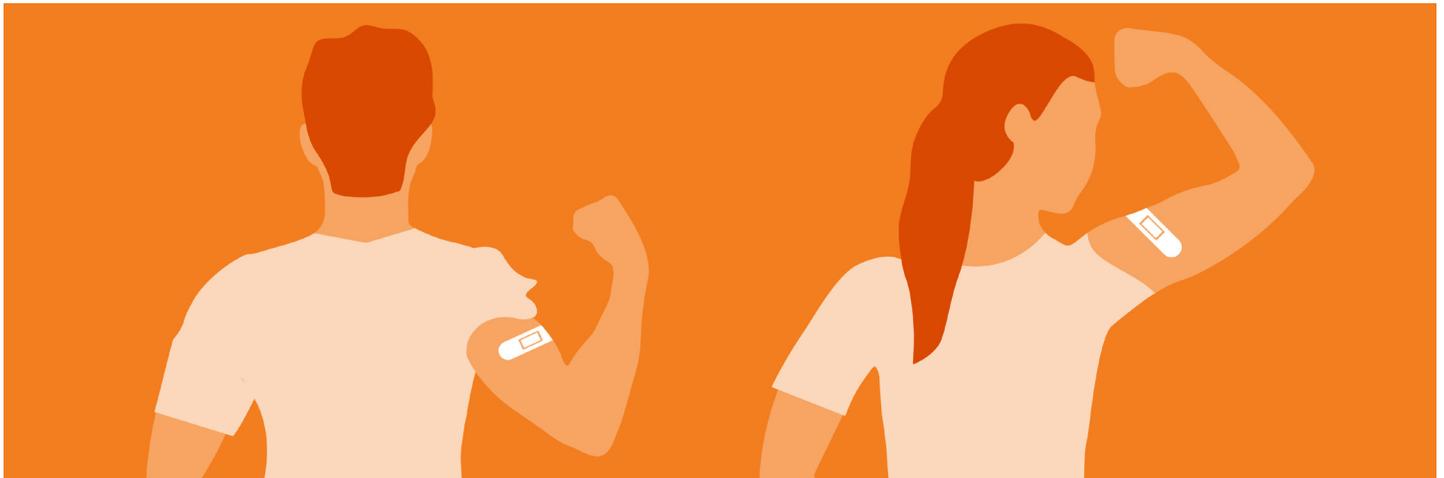
Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have made considerable progress in mitigating its impacts. Nonetheless, despite these efforts, people can still get sick. Getting vaccinated is the best protection against serious illness and hospitalization due to COVID-19. The First Nation Health Authority's (FNHA) medical health officers strongly recommend that you get COVID-19 vaccines for yourself and your children.

All people in British Columbia (BC) aged 6 months and older are eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccines. You can get vaccinated at your community health centre, nursing station, most pharmacies or in a vaccination clinic near you.

The best way to schedule a vaccine appointment in community is to speak to your primary care provider such as your community health nurse or nurse practitioner. If you live away from home, you can register via the provincial Get Vaccinated system. You will automatically receive an electronic invite to get follow-up vaccines when you are eligible.

Following are some frequently asked questions about the COVID-19 vaccines and how to stay up-to-date as we move from a pandemic to an endemic (permanent) state of living with COVID-19.

What if I've never had a COVID-19 vaccine?

If you've never had a COVID-19 vaccine, you can get your first dose by following these steps:

1. Register for your vaccine online through the [Get Vaccinated](#) portal. You can also register by phone by calling 1-833-838-2323.
2. Once you have registered, you will be notified by email, text message or phone call when it is your turn to book an appointment. You can book an appointment online or by calling the COVID-19 vaccine booking line at 1-833-838-2323.
3. When you attend your appointment, bring your personal health number (PHN) and photo ID.

You will likely be offered an mRNA vaccine requiring 2 doses for full effectiveness. This means you will be asked to set up a time to come back for your second dose about 8 weeks after your first dose. Talk to your health care provider (community health nurse) about which vaccine is right for you.

What if I am getting a booster shot?

You are eligible for a booster dose if it has been 6 months from your last dose. Your first 2 doses provide strong protection but their effectiveness can wear off over time. A booster dose will help maintain your level of protection for severe disease and/or hospitalization.

Everyone aged 5 and older is eligible for a booster dose as long as it has been 6 months since their last vaccine dose. You will likely be offered a bivalent vaccine which provides the best protection against 2 strains of COVID-19: the original strain and the Omicron subvariants.

People aged 5-17 will be offered the bivalent vaccine from Pfizer, while people 18 and older will be offered the bivalent vaccine from either Pfizer or Moderna.

What if I am getting a vaccine after recovering from a COVID-19 infection?

Even if you've had COVID-19 and have gotten better, vaccines can still protect against another COVID-19 infection. If you are due for a COVID-19 vaccine or booster, you should get vaccinated after you are feeling well.

If you've just had a positive COVID-19 test result, you can wait up to 6 months for a booster dose. The likelihood of getting sick with COVID-19 within 6 months is low because having a COVID-19 infection boosts your immunity. However, you can choose to get a booster dose at any time after your symptoms have passed. It is not harmful to get vaccinated and it will boost your immunity.

Who is eligible for Spring 2023 Boosters?

The province of BC is offering a spring booster dose to people most at risk for serious illness and hospitalization from COVID-19.

People who should get a spring booster include:

- People in long-term care (or waiting for admission). The care home will ensure residents receive their vaccines.
- Older adults and elders:
    - 80 years and older
    - 70 years and older and Indigenous
- Adults (18+) who are moderately to severely immunocompromised
- Adults (50+) with certain underlying health conditions

In addition, the following people who have not had COVID-19 and at least 2 doses of COVID-19 vaccine may consider getting a spring booster:

- 60 years and older
- 50 years and older and Indigenous
- 18-49 years of age with certain underlying health conditions

Please speak to your primary care provider if you are unsure about whether you are due for a spring booster.

How do I get the booster vaccine if I was vaccinated in 2020 or 2021 but nobody has contacted me since?

If you were vaccinated in community, speak to your primary care provider for an update on receiving a booster dose.

If you were vaccinated through a provincial clinic and have not received an invitation since that time, check that your information is up-to-date or contact the call centre at 1-833-838-2323 Monday to Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

How do I get the booster vaccine if I have all my vaccines outside of BC?

Submit your records from out of province to the BC system so your care provider can determine the best time to give you the booster dose.

1. Register on BC's Get Vaccinated system.
2. Submit proof of an official immunization record. It will be entered into the Provincial Immunization Registry.

If you need help with submitting records and making an appointment in community, reach out to your local community health clinic or nursing station. If you live outside of community you can call the call center for assistance at 1-833-838-2323 Monday to Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Once your records are in the system, you can follow the same steps as everyone else to make an appointment as outlined above.

Note that out of province vaccination records have to be reviewed for authenticity before the nurses can enter them in the system/use them to plan dates.

www.fnha.ca/coronavirus