COVID-19 Vaccine [Developed by Pfizer-BioNTech]

COVID-19

COVID-19 is a viral infection that primarily affects the lungs. Some people may have a mild illness. Others may get very sick, including seniors or people with a pre-existing health condition. Very rarely, some children can get a serious inflammatory condition. The long-term effects of COVID-19 are not fully known. Some people are at greater risk of getting COVID-19 because of their work or living conditions.

How this Vaccine Works

This vaccine tells your body's cells to make "spike proteins." The spike proteins are specific to the virus that causes COVID-19. Your immune system will respond to the spike proteins by making antibodies that will fight off infection. Your new antibodies will break down the spike proteins and get rid of them. Your new antibodies will protect you from illness if you are exposed to the COVID-19 virus. It is not known if the vaccine can prevent infection. The vaccine does not contain the virus and so it cannot give you COVID-19.

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine has been tested in large clinical trials to ensure it has met safety standards, and has been licensed and approved by Health Canada.

Vaccine Benefits

Two doses of the vaccine are required for better protection, given 21 days apart. It can be given to people 16 years of age and older, including seniors. After completing the two-doses, it may take another seven days to achieve maximum protection against COVID-19. At this time, there is no information on the long-term protection with this vaccine. In trials, the vaccine was 95% effective.

There is a small chance that you may still get COVID-19 after being vaccinated. It is important to continue with public health measures such as physical distancing, wearing a mask, and staying home if you are sick. Health care and other staff must still wear personal protective equipment (PPE) even after they have been vaccinated.

Side Effects and Risks

Some people may experience side effects from the vaccine, but they will likely be moderate and resolve after a few days. Some of the symptoms are part of the body's response to developing immunity.

Common side effects that have been reported in the clinical trials for this vaccine include:

very common ≥10% (more than 1 in 10 doses)	**common** 1%-10% (1 in 100 to 1 in 10 doses)	**uncommon** 1% (1 in 100 doses)	**very rare**
o pain at the injection site o headache o feeling tired o muscle or joint pain o fever or chills	redness & swelling at the injection site	enlarged lymph nodes	serious allergic reactions such as anaphylaxis

In rare cases, serious allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) can occur. Allergic reactions can be treated and are usually temporary. Seek medical attention if you have trouble breathing, have hives or swelling of the face and throat. Vaccine side effects will continue to be monitored as people receive the vaccine. If you get a reaction to the vaccine, contact your health care provider who will report the side effect directly to public health. Public health will keep track of the reported side effects to make sure the vaccine continues to be safe.

Precautions

- Delay getting vaccinated if you have a fever, are sick with COVID-19 symptoms, or have received a vaccine in the past 14 days.
- Avoid trying to get pregnant for at least two months after getting both doses of the vaccine.
- Consult your health care provider if you have a bleeding disorder or are on blood thinner medication.

Do not get this vaccine, if you:

- have allergies to any vaccine ingredients, including polyethylene glycol; or
- have had a severe reaction to a previous dose of this vaccine.

Do not get this vaccine without consulting your health care provider, if you:

- are under 16 years of age (you may be able to be vaccinated if you are 12 to 15 years of age);
- are pregnant or breastfeeding; or
- have an autoimmune disorder or a weakened immune system due to illness or treatment.

For more information, talk to your health care provider, or visit toronto.ca/COVID19.

Resources

Government of Canada. Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine: What you should know. Ottawa, ON: December 9, 2020. Available: https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/covid19-industry/drugs-vaccines-treatments/vaccines/pfizer-biontech.html

Pfizer-BioNtech COVID-19 Vaccine product Monograph. December 2020. Available: https://covid-vaccine.canada.ca/info/pdf/pfizer-biontech-covid-19-vaccine-pm1-en.pdf