

COVID-19 Vaccine: Update #17

Clarifications on Essential Caregivers, High-Risk Children 12 to 15 Years of Age, Allergy e-Consult Service and Updated Recommendations on Use of AstraZeneca Vaccine

Attention: Physicians, Emergency Departments, Hospital CEOs, Hospital Laboratories, Infection Control Practitioners, Occupational Health Practitioners, Walk-In Clinics/Urgent Care Clinics, Nurse and Nurse Practitioners, EMS, Designated Officers, Midwives, Family Health Teams, Pharmacies, Central LHIN, NSM LHIN, Beausoleil First Nation, Moose Deer Point First Nation, Rama First Nation, Wahta First Nation, Long-term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, Hospices, Coroners, Funeral Directors, Dentists, Group Homes, Homes for Special Care, Optometrists, Corrections, Municipalities

Date: April 26, 2021

Clarification about Eligible Caregivers for Those Who are Pregnant

As announced on Friday, those who are pregnant are now included in the Highest-Risk health conditions group and are currently eligible for COVID-19 vaccine at our community clinics. Partners of those who are pregnant are generally not eligible; they are only eligible as primary caregivers if they are required to assist their pregnant partner with regular and sustained assistance with personal care and/or activities of daily living such as bathing, feeding, dressing, etc.

Dataloggers Required for Those Storing COVID-19 Vaccine

COVID-19 vaccine continues to be available in very limited supply, and we must protect this supply to maximize the doses available. Any facility who is or will be storing COVID-19 vaccine will be required to have a data logger for their vaccine fridge. These temperature monitoring devices are in addition to a routine min/max thermometer required for your vaccine fridge. They record and store temperatures every 10 to 15 minutes, which becomes essential if the temperature of the fridge goes outside of range because it allows public health to know for exactly how long the excursion lasted. Data loggers are available through medical supply companies and are approximately \$100. For more information on data loggers, please visit the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit [website](#).



No Exceptions for Vaccine Eligibility and Earlier 2nd Dose Interval

We have received a number of calls from clients referred to public health by their primary care provider to request an exception to current eligibility criteria or earlier 2nd dose criteria. We must follow the provincial eligibility criteria and are unable to accommodate such requests.

High-Risk Children 12 to 15 Years of Age

While studies are ongoing on the use of COVID-19 vaccines in children, the current vaccines authorized only officially support use in those 16 years of age and older. However, in accordance with the [Ministry of Health COVID-19 Vaccination Recommendations for Special Populations](#) document a complete series with Pfizer- BioNTech may be offered to individuals 12 to 15 years of age who are at very high risk of severe outcomes of COVID-19 (e.g., due to a pre-existing medical condition known to be associated with increased risk of hospitalization or mortality) AND/OR are at increased risk of exposure (e.g., due to living in a congregate care facility) if a risk assessment deems that the benefits outweigh the potential risks for the individual, and if informed consent is given by the individual (if capable) or the substitute decision maker if the person is incapable (often the parent or guardian). The information provided must include discussion with the treating health care provider (of their medical condition) about the insufficient evidence on the use of COVID-19 vaccines in this population.

The health unit will vaccinate children 12 to 15 years of age who meet the current eligibility criteria of Highest and High-Risk health conditions, only if recommended by their primary care provider or specialist based on the information above. The physician would need to provide the family with a note to present to clinic staff to indicate their recommendation for the vaccine and that they have reviewed the information above with the family.

Allergy Advice for COVID-19 Vaccine is Available on the Ontario e-Consult Service

In response to the COVID-19 vaccination roll out, the Ontario e-Consult Centre or Excellence in partnership with Public Health, OMA, OntarioMD, Ontario Health and the MOH have created a COVID-19 – Allergy/Immunology BASE™ Managed Specialty Group. This group enables physicians and nurse practitioners to ask COVID-19 vaccine allergy related clinical questions to allergy and clinical immunology specialists electronically and receive a response within days. The general COVID-19 infectious disease group continues to be available.

The COVID-19 specialties are the only groups that allow for population-based, non-patient specific clinical questions. The COVID-19 – Allergy/Immunology BASE™ Managed Specialty Group is now available province-wide as has been shared provincially with primary care:

- Accessed through the BASE™ managed specialty option and listed under COVID-19 and Allergy and Clinical Immunology
- A group of allergy and clinical immunology specialists who can answer both patient-specific and general questions about COVID-19 vaccine allergies

- For non-patient specific questions please enter the patient information as follows:
 - First Name: COVID19 / Last Name: COVID19 / Date of Birth: 1900-01-01 / Select OHIP number n/a
- Please note: this group is meant for allergy specific questions only, and not meant for general information regarding COVID-19 vaccine distribution

Updated National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) Statement on Use of AstraZeneca

NACI has updated its recommendations on the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine in light of a rare but serious condition now being referred to as Vaccine-Induced Immune Thrombotic Thrombocytopenia (VITT; also referred to as VIPIT). At this time and based on current evidence, NACI recommends the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine may be offered to individuals 30 years of age and older without contraindications if the individual does not wish to wait for an mRNA vaccine and if the following conditions are met:

- A benefit-risk analysis determines that the benefit of earlier vaccination with the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine outweighs the risk of the individual getting COVID-19 while waiting for an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine;
- The individual provides informed consent once the benefits and risks of VITT compared to COVID-19 are clearly outlined, including how long the individual will have to wait for an mRNA vaccine and what public health measures the individual is able to take to minimize their exposure to the COVID-19 virus and;
- The individual will have to wait a long time in order to receive an mRNA vaccine.

To read the NACI statement, see the [summary statement](#) or the [full statement](#).

Additional Information

For more information about the rollout of COVID-19 vaccine in our area, please refer to the [SMDHU COVID-19 Vaccine and Immunization Webpages](#).

For more information on the province's three-phased vaccine distribution implementation plan, please visit [COVID-19 vaccines for Ontario](#).

There are a number of COVID-19 resources and documents available through our Health Professional Portal at www.smdhu.org/hpportal as well as through [Public Health Ontario](#) and the [Government of Ontario](#).