

COVID-19 Vaccine: Update #3

Attention: Physicians, Emergency Departments, Infection Control Practitioners, Occupational Health Practitioners, Walk-In Clinics/Urgent Care Clinics, 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

Date: January 12, 2021

Barrie COVID-19 Immunization Clinic Update

On December 22nd, Simcoe Muskoka's COVID-19 Immunization Clinic was opened through a partnership with the health unit, Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre (RVH) and the City of Barrie. The clinic is located in the same building as the RVH COVID-19 Testing and Assessment Centre on Sperling Drive in Barrie. Since operations began, almost 7,900 doses of the vaccine have been administered (as of January 10, 2021) to prioritized groups in Simcoe County and Muskoka. At this time the clinic is the second busiest vaccine site in the province, which is a remarkable accomplishment.

COVID-19 Vaccination Recommendations for Special Populations

The province released a guidance document to support risk/benefit discussions of special populations not included in the Phase III clinical trials for the current COVID-19 vaccines. The following is a summary of the key recommendations:

Pregnant Women: COVID-19 mRNA vaccine can be offered if they have been counselled by their treating provider on the risks and benefits of the vaccine, the potential risks of a COVID infection in pregnancy, a review of the risk of acquiring a COVID-19 infection in pregnancy, and provided the client recognizes the insufficiency of evidence for the use of COVID-19 vaccine specifically in the pregnant population.

Breastfeeding Women: COVID-19 mRNA vaccines are not live vaccines, and based on their biologic mechanism of action, mRNA vaccines are not hypothesized to be a risk to the breastfeeding infant. The COVID-19 vaccine should be offered provided the client recognizes the insufficiency of evidence for the use of COVID-19 vaccine specifically in the breastfeeding population.

Persons with Autoimmune Conditions & Immunocompromised Persons (due to disease or treatment): the majority of people in these groups can be offered the COVID-19 vaccine provided the client recognizes the insufficiency of evidence for the use of COVID-19 vaccine specifically in these populations and the possible decreased vaccine effectiveness with the use of immunosuppressive therapy.

Those who are receiving the following immunosuppressive therapies can be offered the vaccine if they have been counselled by their treating provider and it has been determined that the potential benefits of vaccination outweigh the potential risks for them:



- stem cell therapy, CAR-T therapy, chemotherapy, immune checkpoint inhibitors, monoclonal antibodies (e.g. rituximab) and other targeted agents (e.g., CD4/6 inhibitors, PARP inhibitors etc.)

Persons with Severe Allergies (i.e. anaphylaxis): Anyone who has had a severe allergic reaction (i.e. anaphylaxis) to other vaccines or injectable therapies must be evaluated by an allergist or immunologist before getting the vaccine. Anyone with a history of severe allergic reactions (i.e. anaphylaxis) not related to vaccines or injectable therapies – such as food, pet, insects, venom, environmental - should be offered the COVID-19 vaccine. These people should remain in after care for 30 minutes post-vaccination.

Update on Moderna Vaccine Supply

The initial allocation of Moderna vaccine that SMDHU was to receive this week has been reallocated to areas of the province where the case count is the highest. While we will be receiving Moderna vaccine at some time, no delivery date has been provided at this time.

Mobility of the Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine

Approval was received on January 5th 2021 from the province that the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine could be moved to other clinic locations away from the original approved hospital clinics. Due to the storage conditions required for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine (-60°C to -80°C), the vaccine continues to be allocated to the hospital clinic sites. SMDHU is working with RVH to mobilize this vaccine supply to long term care homes (LTCH) & retirement homes (Rhome) until Moderna vaccine becomes available to SMDHU.

Vaccine supply continues to be limited and is currently prioritized for:

- Residents, staff and essential caregivers of long term care homes
- Residents, staff and essential caregivers of high risk retirement homes
- Health care workers in hospitals
- Other congregate settings caring for seniors

Planning for the immunization for health care workers outside of hospitals and the rest of the population is currently underway utilizing the provincial guidance documents. SMDHU is launching a Simcoe-Muskoka COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign Advisory Committee to advise on the planning and coordination of the mass vaccination campaign for the weeks and months to come against COVID-19 for the population within the geographic boundaries of the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (County of Simcoe, the District Municipality of Muskoka, Barrie and Orillia). There will be representation from the following sectors: public health, primary care, First Nations communities and urban/rural Indigenous populations, acute care (hospitals), community pharmacies, long term care and paramedic services (both via municipal representation from Simcoe County and the District of Muskoka), the Local Health Integration Networks, and the Central Region of Ontario Health. The terms of reference and membership of this Committee will be made public on the SMDHU website after their inaugural meeting this Wednesday (January 13).

Timing of Dose #2

The Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table recently reviewed the evidence supporting ensuring as many first doses are provided to the highest risk groups as possible vs ensuring second doses are provided at 21 days. Their conclusion was that providing first doses to as many people as possible provides more protection for our most at risk groups. Evidence has shown that people continue to have a high level of protection (85%) for at least 11 to 21 days after receiving their first dose, so good protection is anticipated to continue beyond 21 days. It is important to note that while the majority of people in the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials received their second dose 21 to 27 days apart, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) supports an alternate schedule of 28 days for this product based on minimum intervals required for other vaccines.

To maximize the number of doses we have available over the coming weeks to immunize all LTCH & Rhone residents and as many staff and essential caregivers as possible, people who are immunized at 29 Sperling this week will be booked for their dose #2 appointment 28 days later. We will continue to reassess the timing of second dose appointments when we are immunizing people with their first dose and book their appointments in the range of 21 to 28 days, based on vaccine supply.

Anyone who is currently booked to receive their second dose at the 29 Sperling Drive Clinic over the next weeks, will continue to be immunized as originally scheduled.

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

In order to facilitate the provincial goal of having long term care and retirement home residents, staff and essential caregivers immunized as soon as possible, mobile immunization teams from SMDHU will be visiting each facility to administer the vaccine on site to all residents starting on January 11th 2021. RVH has assumed leadership of the operation of the 29 Sperling Drive clinic and is continuing to offer appointments for staff and essential caregivers, hospital staff and second doses of vaccine for those immunized starting in January based on current vaccine supply.

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

SMDHU has developed a "[What you need to know before your appointment to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine](#)" resource based on the updated recommendations which can be shared with those coming to the COVID-19 Immunization Clinic at 29 Sperling Drive in Barrie to be immunized.

ⁱ <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccines-ontario>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/>

ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/2019_guidance.aspx.