



March 22, 2021

Dear Patients,

As expected, the rollout rolls on... This week we will see some further expansion of the eligibility criteria for COVID-19 vaccines, with the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines becoming available to all individuals 75 years or older, and AstraZeneca vaccines available for anyone 60 and over.

We continue to encourage ALL of our patients who are eligible to schedule a vaccine appointment as soon as possible-- and if you're not eligible but know/care for someone who is, please do reach out to assist those who are eligible for a shot but who might face challenges scheduling themselves (due to internet connectivity issues or otherwise). We fully expect that everyone will get their turn for vaccination, hopefully much sooner rather than later-- but in the meantime, we are ALL better protected when more of our family, friends and neighbours get vaccinated!

Current options for scheduling vaccination appointments:

75 years or older (born 1946 or earlier) - eligible for Pfizer/Moderna:

- Ontario centralized booking site: <https://covid19.ontariohealth.ca/>
- City of Toronto - Mass Vaccination Clinics: <https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/>
- Hospital clinics (Toronto): <https://vaccineto.ca/landing>

(**If you are already pre-registered at a hospital site, it is our hope/expectation that you will be contacted to schedule an appointment)

60 years or older (born 1961 or earlier) - eligible for AstraZeneca (AZ) vaccine:

- COVID-19 pharmacy vaccine locations: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/vaccine-locations>
- Some local clinics have been running AZ vaccine clinics pilot projects; it is hoped these clinics and similar options will be expanded in the coming days and weeks as well:
 - [North York Family Health Team](#) (240 Duncan Mill Road - Don Mills/Sheppard)
 - [Get Well Clinic](#) (651 Sheppard Avenue West - Bathurst/Sheppard)

We continue to hear from many of you regarding concerns about the AstraZeneca (AZ) vaccine, the longer intervals between the first and second doses of all vaccines, as well as questions about the next phase of the vaccine rollout (Phase 2). Here is what we currently know:

- **Get the first vaccine made available to you** – Waiting for your 'preferred' vaccine risks potentially getting COVID-19 and associated illness. To best protect yourself and others, we agree that the best COVID-19 vaccine is the one that reaches your arm first. All



COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in Canada are highly effective in preventing severe illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19.

- **The 16-week interval time between doses is intended to protect more Ontarians, more quickly.** Due to still limited supply, all second doses for the 2-dose vaccines in Canada have now been moved up to a maximum of 16 weeks to ensure more people can receive the first dose of the vaccine. This decision was made by Canada's Chief Medical Officer of Health based on recommendations from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI).
- **AstraZeneca (AZ) Vaccine Safety:** [Health Canada](#) has assessed the data on reported events and determined that the AZ vaccine has not been associated with an increase in the overall risk of blood clots. [Thrombosis Canada](#) (an organization that produces guidelines on diagnosis and treatment of diseases associated with blood clotting) also strongly recommends COVID-19 vaccination, including the AZ vaccine.

In Europe, after a review of the 20 million AZ vaccinations completed so far in Europe and the United Kingdom, the [European Medicines Agency \(EMA\)](#) has said that AZ is a safe and effective vaccine and the benefits of the vaccine in protecting people from COVID-19 outweigh the risks of side effects.

For further information on the AZ as well as Johnson & Johnson vaccines, please see this summary from the [Centre for Effective Practice](#).

- **Ontario's Vaccination Plan - Phase 2:** Ontario's COVID-19 vaccination program currently calls for the province to move into [Phase 2](#) in April-July, depending on vaccine availability. In fact, part of Phase 2 has already begun, with the expansion of eligibility to include all older adults between 60-79 years of age. As the Phase 2 rollout continues, it is expected that vaccine eligibility criteria will expand further. **At the present time, we still do not know how exactly these criteria will be applied, particularly with regard to high risk chronic conditions.** Like you, we're staying tuned for more information as it becomes available!

Additional links & information:

- Centre for Effective Practice - [available vaccine options at a glance](#)
- Ontario College of Family Physicians - [Cancer & COVID-19 vaccination](#)
- Tkaronto Indigenous vaccine access - [Call Auntie](#)
- NYGH - [vaccination program FAQ](#)