

COVID-19 Vaccination

Why your 2nd dose is important



The 2nd dose is the **essential second half** of your vaccine series. Both doses are needed to get the most effective protection against serious cases of COVID-19 and provide longer-lasting protection.

It's important that you complete the vaccine series. You are not fully protected until you've had both doses.

Side effects of the 2nd dose

In clinical trials for both Moderna and Pfizer, there were slightly higher rates of reported side effects for the 2nd dose. This is because the immune system has learned the information from the 1st dose and can mean that the immune system is responding in a stronger way to the 2nd dose. These side effects usually go away within 2-3 days. Some people do not have any side effects at all. This is also normal and does not reflect how well the vaccine has worked for you.

In Canada, the most common side effects reported for Moderna and Pfizer are: redness, swelling or itchiness at the injection site and headache. These are all common side effects for vaccines in general.

Serious side effects, which may result in hospitalization, were reported by less than 0.01% of Moderna or Pfizer recipients. For any vaccines approved in Canada, the risk of serious side effects is very low.

Mixing vaccine brands for the 2nd dose

- Mixing similar vaccines from different manufacturers is safe and effective. It is often done with other vaccines – for example, hepatitis A and measles, mumps and rubella (MMR). There are standards in place to determine the effectiveness and safety of mixing vaccines.
- Moderna and Pfizer are both mRNA vaccines and work the same way. If you've received a 1st dose of one mRNA vaccine and are offered the other for your 2nd dose, it is effective and safe to get it.
- It is safe and effective to get an mRNA vaccine after a 1st dose of AstraZeneca. Read on for more information.
- There are many clinical trials and population studies of vaccine mixing taking place around the world, including Canada. Results from Germany, the UK and Spain have shown the effectiveness and safety of a mixed vaccine series. We also have real world evidence to support the practice. Over two million people in Canada have safely received a combination of COVID-19 vaccines. Canada began allowing mixing COVID-19 vaccine brands in early June and the rate of reported adverse events has continued to trend down since then.
- Two doses are required to be fully immunized and for long-term protection.

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I got AstraZeneca for my 1st dose. What are my options?

- If you received the AstraZeneca or COVISHIELD vaccine for your 1st dose, you made the right choice to get vaccinated with the 1st vaccine available to you. For your 2nd dose, you can choose to get AstraZeneca or an mRNA vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna).
- Whichever vaccine you choose, there have not been any issues detected with safety or effectiveness from mixing vaccine types.

2nd dose options

AstraZeneca

- There is a very rare risk of serious blood clots associated with the AstraZeneca viral vector vaccine. The risk for people who received a 2nd dose is about 1 in 600,000. This is six times lower than the 1st dose, which is about 1 in 100,000.
- The effectiveness of getting AstraZeneca for both doses is similar to the effectiveness of getting two doses of mRNA vaccine in the prevention of serious cases of COVID-19.
- You are likely to experience milder side effects with the 2nd dose of the same vaccine than if you mix vaccines.

mRNA (Pfizer or Moderna)

- There is no risk of serious blood clots with the mRNA vaccines.
- You may experience more short-term side effects if you get an mRNA vaccine for your 2nd dose.
- Along with real world evidence, there are many clinical trials and population studies that have shown the effectiveness and safety of mixing an mRNA vaccine with AstraZeneca.

I got Pfizer or Moderna for my 1st dose. What do I need to do?

Make sure you have registered with the Get Vaccinated system at getvaccinated.gov.bc.ca. You will be contacted by text, email or phone when you are able to book your 2nd dose appointment. If you have questions, call 1-833-838-2323.

How do I find info on my 1st vaccine?

If you can't remember what vaccine you got or the date of your 1st dose, look on your immunization record card or online through Health Gateway at www.healthgateway.gov.bc.ca

I lost my COVID-19 immunization card. Can I still get my 2nd dose?

Yes, you can. Your information about the 1st dose is in our system, and at your 2nd appointment, the staff at the clinic can give you another card.

Remember you need both doses to be fully immunized and for long-term protection.

For more info on how to claim your 2nd dose, visit Get Your 2nd Vaccine Dose on the BC Government website at [gov.bc.ca/dose2](https://www.gov.bc.ca/dose2).