

COMMUNITY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION DECEMBER 29, 2020

1. What is the age group that the vaccine is available to?

Vaccines are recommended for individuals 18+. Neither of the COVID-19 vaccines that have been approved are recommended for children or pregnant people until more research is conducted. Question from Becky: Do we want to make a specific comment about breastfeeding mothers?

2. Is the vaccine available to other people living in community e.g. RCMP living in community, teachers, counsellors, band employees, non-First Nations people etc.?

We are promoting a whole community approach to vaccination which includes all residents 18+. The goal is to maximize the number of people in community that are being immunized. This includes individuals who live off reserve, but close to community, due to housing challenges.

3. How does this unfold in community e.g. Elders only?

A whole community approach is being recommended such that all adults 18+, who freely consent, receive the vaccination. In terms of the order of the immunization roll-out e.g. by age, communities will make this determination.

4. What do we do if we don't have enough staff?

Our regional health authority partners are supporting the roll-out by providing extra certified immunization staff to assist communities where needed and as able.

5. Is vaccine targeted for on reserve population?

At this time, the vaccines are available for individuals living in community and the doses sent reflect the on-reserve population that are 18 and over. Work with our regional health authority partners is underway to support urban and away from home members.

6. Some community members would like to wait to get the vaccine until later, will there be a second opportunity for community-based vaccinations?

Each individual will make their own decision as to whether to receive a COVID-19 vaccination. Feeling worried or hesitant is completely normal when something is new, however, we can be reassured that Health Canada has a thorough approval process that ensures the safety of the many vaccines and medicines we take routinely. We recommend that all community members be vaccinated during the upcoming clinics as there is no guarantee that additional clinics will be available in community.

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7. Can I get the COVID-19 vaccine if I have allergies?

It depends on what you are allergic to. If you have a serious, life-threatening allergic reaction to any parts of the vaccine (like polyethylene glycol - PEG - which is common in laxatives), then you should not receive the vaccine. Or, if you have had a life threatening reaction to a previous dose of the COVID-19 vaccine or to any other part of the vaccine. Make sure that your healthcare provider knows about all of your allergies before you get any vaccine.

8. What if some community members have chronic conditions like diabetes or long term heart or lung conditions etc. should they be vaccinated?

Yes, it's particularly important for these individuals to receive the vaccinations. There are very few reasons why someone would not be eligible to receive the vaccine and these include an allergy to PEG, an immune system weakened by disease or medical treatment, is pregnant, may be pregnant or is planning to become pregnant, has an autoimmune disease, or received a vaccine in the last 14 days.

9. If we have extra vaccines leftover can we move them to other communities within our family, sub-region, or Nation?

There are very strict rules on how the vaccine can be transported and who can transport it. This is part of the contract with the vaccine producer as well as to ensure it is handled in a way that maintains its effectiveness. More details can be provided by the regional health authority or FNHA team.

10. Once we get the vaccine, do we still adhere to Dr. Bonnie Henry's public health measures?

Yes, given we are still early in the vaccine roll-out process, it is important that we all keep our bubbles small, wash our hands, wear a mask when 6 ft. of distance can't be maintained, not attend large gatherings etc. even after we receive our immunization. These orders stand until there is very strong herd immunity which includes not only the community you live in but everywhere else you go e.g. to get groceries or gas. in neighboring communities

11. Is there a need to get the COVID-19 vaccine if a person has already had the virus and developed antibodies?

Receiving the COVID-19 vaccine is recommended even if you have had a previous infection as the studies so far show vaccine produces a better immune response than natural illness.

12. Is there a reason why the Moderna vaccine was chosen?

The Moderna vaccine is being used to support immunization for remote communities as it stored at approximately -20 degrees Celsius. The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine must be stored at ultralow temperatures of -80 to -60 degrees Celsius. This makes it much more challenging to transport into rural and remote communities. This vaccine is equally effective as the Pfizer vaccine.

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13. Do community members need to isolate after receiving vaccine?

Isolation after receiving the vaccine is not required unless you have already been ordered to isolate following a positive COVID-19 test or identified as a close contact. In these cases, you should continue to observe your isolation period.

14. Will there be immunization certifications?

Individuals receiving a COVID-19 vaccination will receive a provincial wallet card outlining the dose received. These supplies are being shipped to communities for the health centre team to distribute along with the vaccinations.