

# RNA COVID-19 Vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna)

Vaccination,  
the best protection

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Vaccination is the best protection against COVID-19 and its complications, in addition to other measures such as physical distancing, wearing a medical mask or face covering, and hand washing.

Disease	Signs and symptoms	Possible complications
COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fever</li><li>• Cough</li><li>• Trouble breathing</li><li>• Loss of smell</li><li>• Fatigue</li><li>• Headaches</li><li>• Muscle aches</li><li>• Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea</li><li>• Overall sick feeling</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pneumonia and other respiratory issues</li><li>• Heart problems</li><li>• Neurological problems</li><li>• Death</li></ul>

## The vaccine

Vaccination is the best protection against COVID-19 and its complications. Pfizer vaccine and Moderna vaccine are approved for people age 12 and over. For youth ages 12 to 17 years, Pfizer vaccine is recommended.

Pfizer vaccine or Moderna vaccine require 2 doses. After 2 doses, Pfizer vaccine or Moderna vaccine efficacy is more than 90%. The 2<sup>nd</sup> dose should be given at least 4 weeks after the 1<sup>st</sup> dose. This 2<sup>nd</sup> dose is required to increase protection especially against some variants and duration of protection. **It is therefore important to continue to apply health measures until a majority of the population has received 2 doses of vaccine.**

People on dialysis or with weakened immune systems should receive 3 doses of vaccine.

Quebec experts recommend that people age 18 and over who received AstraZeneca or Covishield vaccine as their 1<sup>st</sup> dose receive Pfizer or Moderna vaccine for their 2<sup>nd</sup> dose. Administration of a Pfizer or Moderna vaccine for the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose produces a better immune response than 2 doses of AstraZeneca or Covishield vaccine. Administration of a Pfizer or Moderna vaccine at least 8 weeks after a dose of AstraZeneca or Covishield vaccine does not appear to cause more reactions than 2 doses of RNA vaccine. However, people who received AstraZeneca or Covishield vaccine as the 1<sup>st</sup> dose may choose to receive a 2<sup>nd</sup> dose of AstraZeneca or Covishield vaccine.

## Symptoms after vaccination

Some symptoms may be caused by the vaccine (e.g., pain at the injection site). Other problem may occur by chance and are not related to the vaccine (e.g., cold, gastro). Most reactions are harmless and do not last long. Local reactions can occur up to 8 days after vaccination. Reactions are less common among people age 55 and over.

In a minority of those vaccinated, vaccine-induced reactions that prevent daily activities for 1 or 2 days may occur. Reactions include fatigue, headache, and muscle or joint pain. They can occur up to 8 days after vaccination. These reactions are less common among the elderly. They occur more often after the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose.

Pfizer and Moderna vaccines cannot cause COVID-19 because they do not contain the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes the disease. However, people who have been in contact with the virus in the days preceding or following their vaccination could still develop COVID-19.

For people who have had COVID-19 before the 1<sup>st</sup> dose of vaccine, a single dose is required. There is no risk of giving 2 doses of vaccine to someone who has had COVID-19, but the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose does not provide any additional protection for these people. For people who had COVID-19 when they were given the 1<sup>st</sup> dose or after, a total of 2 doses are required. People on dialysis or with weakened immune systems should receive 3 doses of vaccine.

## Safety of the vaccine

Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are approved by Health Canada. They have met all the requirements for approval. These vaccines were tested on a large number of people. Experts are closely monitoring any adverse reactions that could occur following vaccination and taking measures to ensure the safety and effectiveness of these vaccines.

(see verso)

# RNA COVID-19 Vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna) *(continued)*

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Frequency	Known reactions to this vaccine	What to do
In most cases (more than 50% of people)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pain at the injection site</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply a cold, damp compress at the injection site.</li> <li>• Use medication for fever or discomfort if needed.</li> <li>• See a doctor if symptoms are severe.</li> </ul>
Very often (less than 50% of people)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Headache, fatigue*</li> <li>• Fever or shivering</li> <li>• Joint pain</li> <li>• Muscle soreness</li> <li>• Diarrhea or vomiting</li> <li>• Swollen armpit lymph nodes</li> </ul>	
Often (less than 10% of people)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redness or swelling at the injection site. This reaction could appear more than 1 week after vaccination</li> </ul>	
Rarely (less than 1 person in 1,000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facial swelling</li> </ul>	
Very rarely (less than 1 person in 10,000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myocarditis or pericarditis following vaccination**</li> </ul>	

\* The majority of youth ages 12 to 15 years experience fatigue or a headache.

\*\* In youth aged 12 to 17, this risk may be lower with the Pfizer vaccine.

Headache, fatigue, muscle soreness and joint pain occur more often after the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose. Myocarditis or pericarditis occur more frequently in young males under the age of 30 following the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose. Cases present most often with mild symptoms and recover quickly.

Approximately 2 persons in 100,000 can have a severe allergic reaction after receiving this vaccine. The frequency of this reaction is higher than usually expected after a vaccine, but it is still very rare.

If you have COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough, trouble breathing, loss of smell, etc.), consult the *COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment Tool* to find out if you need to be tested:

<https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/covid-19-symptom-self-assessment-tool/>

We recommend that you stay at the clinic at least 15 minutes after vaccination because allergic reaction may occur. If an allergic reaction occurs, the symptoms will appear a few minutes after vaccination. The person giving the vaccine will be able to treat this reaction immediately.

**For any questions, contact the person giving the vaccine, or Info-Santé 811 or your doctor.**