

Viral vector-based COVID-19 Vaccine (AstraZeneca or Covishield)

Vaccination,
the best protection

March 9, 2022

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">• Fever• Cough• Trouble breathing• Loss of smell• Fatigue• Headaches• Muscle aches• Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea• Overall sick feeling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Persistent long COVID-19 complications lasting several months: trouble breathing, fatigue, weakness, difficulty falling/staying asleep, and concentrating• Pneumonia and other respiratory issues• Heart problems• Neurological problems such as brain inflammation, etc.• Death

The vaccine

Vaccination is the best protection against COVID-19 and its complications. AstraZeneca and Covishield vaccines can be given to people age 18 and over for whom RNA vaccines are contraindicated or who refuse RNA vaccines.

AstraZeneca or Covishield vaccines require 2 doses. A booster dose of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine is also recommended for adults who received AstraZeneca or Covishield vaccines. The booster dose provides a better immune response than 2 doses of AstraZeneca or Covishield vaccines. Administration of a Pfizer or Moderna vaccines after a dose of AstraZeneca or Covishield vaccines does not appear to cause more reactions than 2 doses of RNA vaccine. However, people who received AstraZeneca or Covishield vaccines may choose to continue their vaccination with AstraZeneca or Covishield vaccines.

AstraZeneca and Covishield vaccines are approximately 60-80% effective against infections caused by the Alpha and Delta variants. Studies are ongoing to evaluate the efficacy of these vaccines against the Omicron variant.

People on dialysis or with a weakened immune system should receive 3 doses followed by a booster dose, preferably with a RNA vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna).

For people who had a positive test for COVID-19 before the 1st dose of vaccine, 1 dose is required, followed by a booster dose. There is no risk in giving a total of 3 doses of vaccine to someone who has had COVID-19, but the 3rd dose does not provide any additional protection to these people. For people who had COVID-19 when they were given the 1st dose or after, a total of 2 doses are required. People on dialysis or with weakened immune systems should receive 3 doses.

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, diarrhea). Most reactions are harmless and do not last long. These reactions occur more often with the 1st dose.

AstraZeneca and Covishield 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 could still develop COVID-19.

Safety of the vaccine

AstraZeneca and Covishield vaccines are approved by Health Canada. They have met all the requirements for approval. They have been 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.

Very rare cases of serious blood clots with drop in the number of blood cells that help clotting following vaccination with AstraZeneca or Covishield vaccines. These cases have been reported mostly after the 1st dose. Very rare cases of Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) have been reported following vaccination with AstraZeneca or Covishield vaccines. This syndrome causes progressive, reversible paralysis, which can sometimes leave permanent effects. The cause of GBS is unknown. Most cases occur after an intestinal or respiratory infection, especially in young adults and the elderly.

(see verso)

Viral vector-based COVID-19 Vaccine (AstraZeneca or Covishield) *(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"> • Pain or tenderness at the injection site • Headache, fatigue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply a cold, damp compress at the injection site. • Use medication for fever or discomfort if needed. • See a doctor if symptoms are severe, especially if the following symptoms appear within a few days of vaccination: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – shortness of breath, chest pain, leg swelling or stomach pain; – severe headache or headache that has lasted for a few days, blurred vision or bruises on the skin.
Very often (less than 50% of people)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Itching, swelling, warmth, redness or bruising at the injection site • Shivering, discomfort, nausea • Muscle soreness • Joint pain 	
Often (less than 10% of people)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever • Diarrhea (Covishield vaccine only) 	
Very rarely (1 to 9 persons in 100,000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blood clots with drop in the number of blood cells that help clotting within 4 to 20 days after the 1st dose • Guillain-Barré syndrome 	
Exceptionally (1 to 9 persons in 1 million)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blood clots with drop in the number of blood cells that help clotting within 4 to 20 days after the 2nd dose 	

Shivering, discomfort, fatigue, muscle soreness and headache occur more often after the 1st dose.

If you have COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough, trouble breathing, loss of smell, etc.), consult the *COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment Tool*:
<https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/self-isolation/covid-19-self-assessment-tool>.

We recommend that you stay at the clinic for at least 15 minutes after vaccination because allergic reactions may occur. If an allergic reaction occurs, the symptoms will appear a few minutes after the 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.