

January 17, 2021 - Update re COVID19 Vaccine Roll-out in Ontario

As we begin 2021, we are happy to advise you that after a difficult 2020, there is hope – COVID-19 vaccines are on their way. All our physicians highly recommend this vaccine for eligible patients.

When will the vaccine be available to Albany patients?

We do not yet know the place or the timing and we will communicate this when we do. As you all know, the first vaccines are being given to higher-risk people and healthcare workers.

How are the vaccines being allocated right now?

The Ontario Ministry of Health has a three phase strategy to vaccinate all Ontarians by the end of September 2021.

- Phase 1 - addresses those at highest risk for more severe COVID-19 illness, and their close contacts. Those living and working in congregate living settings for seniors including their essential caregivers, are now being vaccinated, in addition to health care workers, hospital employees, and indigenous communities.
- Phase 2 - This will include other congregate care settings (eg. shelters) and people in the community over age 70 years old.
- Phase 3 - immunizations to the general population.

What vaccines are we likely to get?

The current available vaccines (Pfizer BioNTech and Moderna) are approved for those over aged 16-18 years, and who have no known allergy to their vaccine components.

What are the important facts about the vaccines that I should know?

- **Appropriate steps have been taken** – The vaccines were developed so fast because it was a top priority for everyone in the field and billions of dollars from governments and companies around the world were spent on getting it developed. The scientific world cooperated in ways they had not before. The bureaucratic process was super-fast because of the importance of getting this through.
- **New technology** – mRNA has been studied and used for cancer treatments for upwards of 30 years, but this is the first vaccine using the technology. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are made this way. mRNA vaccines cannot give someone COVID-19 as they do not use the live virus that causes COVID-19. They also do not affect or interact with our DNA in any way. There will be other vaccines coming later which are made with older technology.
- **Effectiveness** – In clinical studies, very few people got COVID-19 within 12 days of getting the first dose of the Pfizer vaccine. This result is similar to the Moderna vaccine, which is the other COVID-19 vaccine now approved for use in Canada.

- **Pregnancy/breastfeeding** – Pregnant and breastfeeding women were not included in trials for the currently available vaccines. However, the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada has [stated](#) that “the documented risk of not getting the COVID-19 vaccine outweighs the theorized and undescribed risk of being vaccinated during pregnancy or while breastfeeding **and vaccination should be offered.**” The Ontario Ministry of Health guidance states that pregnant women should discuss risks and benefits with their family physician or primary healthcare provider. The Ministry also point out that mRNA vaccines are not live vaccines and are not expected to be a risk to the breastfeeding infant. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, we will discuss the risks and benefits to help you make an informed decision about receiving the vaccine.
- **Allergies** – People who have ever had a severe allergic reaction (i.e., anaphylaxis) to a previous dose of an mRNA vaccine or any of the ingredients in the vaccine should not receive it. We will discuss any allergies or other health conditions you may have before you receive the vaccine. If needed, we can seek input from an allergist-immunologist.
- **Autoimmune conditions/Immunocompromised** – If you have an autoimmune or immunodeficiency condition, or are immunosuppressed due to disease or treatment, please discuss the benefits and risks of vaccination given your particular situation with your Albany family doctor and come to a decision together. People with these conditions were not included in the trials for the currently available vaccines, although vaccination may be a good idea for you to reduce your risk of getting a COVID-19 infection.

Where can I get more information on the vaccines and their safety?

<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccines-ontario>

If you have specific questions about whether you can receive the vaccine when available, please make an appointment to discuss with your family doctor directly.

Please do not call our office for information about where and when to access COVID vaccine as we do not have any additional details at this time. We will update our website as more information is available.

We thank you for your understanding as we help you in your health in different ways. Thank you all for what you have done to keep yourselves, your loved ones, and your communities safe.

We look forward to when the vaccine allows us to return to a life that is more connected. In the meantime – Wear a mask, keep your distance, wash your hands. AND be calm, be safe, be kind.

In Health,

Albany Medical Clinic