

Rolling up your sleeve to fight COVID-19

Facts and information about vaccination for
City of St. Catharines employees

The information provided in this module is general in nature.

The Corporation of the City of St. Catharines, is not an authority on such matters and as such the City relies on federal and provincial resources with regards to information concerning COVID-19 and the associated vaccinations.

For specific information about COVID-19 and how its associated vaccines pertain to you, please seek the advice of a qualified health care practitioner.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, there have been globally:

- **237.3 million cases**
- **4.8 million deaths**



In Canada, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in:

- **1.653 million cases**
- **28,100 deaths**



Health authorities worldwide and at home have pointed to vaccination as the single most effective way to end the pandemic.



The majority of Canadians are fully vaccinated.

81 per cent of eligible Canadians are fully vaccinated.*

This represents **71.09 per cent** of country's population.

* As of Oct. 8, 2021

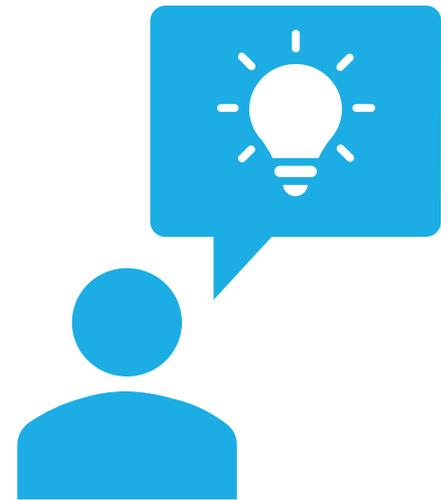
However, this means there is a significant number of eligible Canadians who are unvaccinated.

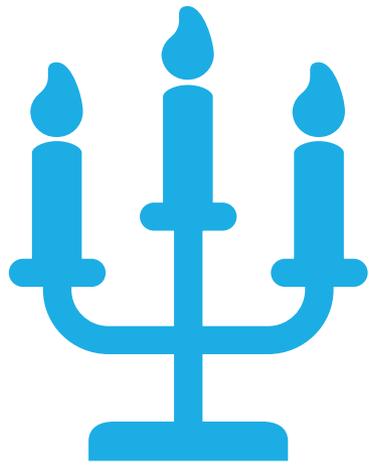
They remain vulnerable to COVID-19 and are at a greater risk of hospitalization and death.

People who remain unvaccinated, despite being eligible, generally fall into one of three categories:

- 1. It is against their religion to get vaccinated.**
- 2. They have underlying health conditions.**
- 3. They are unsure about the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine.**

This module will address these reasons and provide information intended to encourage employees to get vaccinated.





Religious exemption to vaccination

Under the Ontario Human Rights Code, employers have a duty to accommodate people who decline the vaccine due to their religion.

This duty does not extend to personal opinions or singular beliefs of individuals who choose not to be vaccinated.

From the Ontario Human Rights Commission statement on vaccine mandates:

“Receiving a COVID-19 vaccine is voluntary. At the same time, the OHRC’s position is that a person who chooses not to be vaccinated based on personal preference does not have the right to accommodation under the Code. The OHRC is not aware of any tribunal or court decision that found a singular belief against vaccinations or masks amounted to a creed within the meaning of the Code.

While the Code prohibits discrimination based on creed, personal preferences or singular beliefs do not amount to a creed for the purposes of the Code.”

To read the full Ontario Human Rights Commission policy statement on vaccine mandates, visit:

http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/news_centre/ohrc-policy-statement-COVID-19-vaccine-mandates-and-proof-vaccine-certificates



Underlying health conditions

Many people have unique health situations and may wonder how COVID-19 vaccine policies apply to them.

Most people can safely get a COVID-19 vaccine.

But there are a few valid reasons for medical exemption from getting the vaccine.

Exemption 1

People who were diagnosed with myocarditis or pericarditis after dose 1 of a COVID-19 vaccine.

Exemption 1

People with prior myocarditis or pericarditis should speak to their medical team for advice.

They should not have a second dose at this time.

Exemption 2

People who have:

- A confirmed anaphylactic allergy to an ingredient in a COVID-19 vaccine

OR

- Had an anaphylactic allergic reaction to dose 1 of a COVID-19 vaccine

Exemption 2

People with a history of anaphylactic allergic reaction should seek the advice of an allergist before proceeding.

Many have been able to get vaccinated under the guidance of an allergist.

There are many underlying medical conditions that are not considered an exception to vaccination.

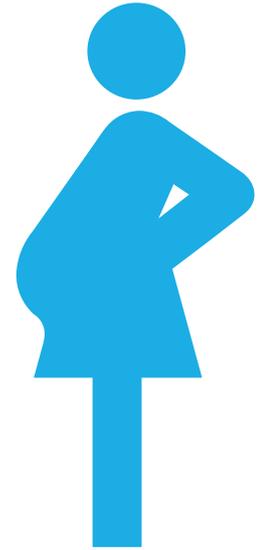
These include pregnancy, allergic reactions to other vaccines, anxiety and serious health conditions.



Pregnancy

Pregnancy is not a medical reason to be exempt from COVID-19 vaccination.

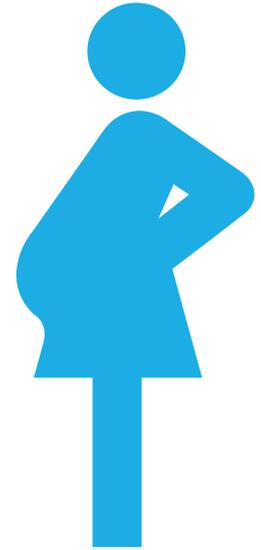
The vaccines have been shown to be safe for use during pregnancy and may help protect against early birth, serious illness, and death.



Pregnancy

COVID-19 infection can cause serious problems during pregnancy and infected pregnant people are more likely to need intensive care.

COVID-19 infection may lead the baby to be born early and may need to be cared for in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU).



Fertility

Fertility concerns are not a medical reason to be exempt from COVID-19 vaccination.

There is no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines affect male or female fertility, genes (DNA), hormones, implantation, or the healthy growth of babies.



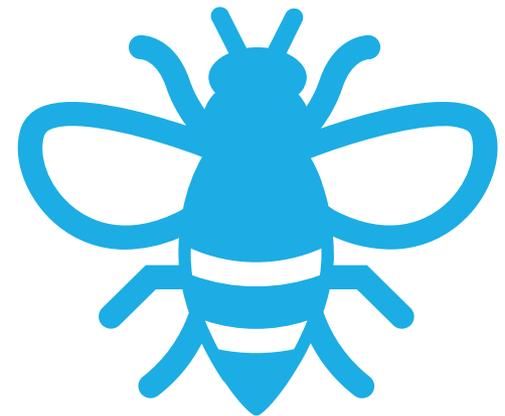
Fertility

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC), and the Canadian Fertility and Andrology Society (CFAS) recommend that people who are considering or who may become pregnant at any time in the future be offered COVID-19 vaccines.



Allergies

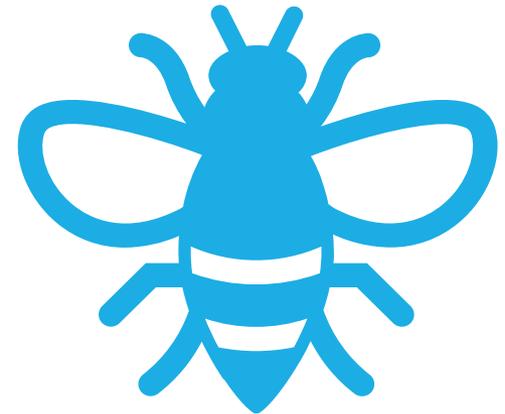
Allergies, including anaphylaxis or contact dermatitis (skin allergy), to anything other than a vaccine ingredient are not a medical reason to be exempt from COVID-19 vaccination.



COVID-19 vaccines are recommended for people who have anaphylactic allergies to other things.

Allergies

The mRNA COVID-19 vaccines have simple ingredients. It is very unlikely that someone with anaphylactic allergies to other things will have an allergic reaction to COVID-19 vaccines.



Serious health conditions

Having serious health conditions is not a medical reason to be exempt from COVID-19 vaccination.

Vaccines are recommended for most people who have serious health conditions, including diabetes, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, liver, kidney and heart disease, and Parkinson's.



Serious health conditions

Many people with serious health conditions have a higher risk of becoming severely ill or dying from COVID-19 infection.

People who have a complex health history should speak with their healthcare team for vaccination advice.



Medicines that affect the immune system

Taking medications that affect the immune system is not a medical reason to be exempt from COVID-19 vaccination.

Vaccines are recommended for most people who take medications that affect the immune system.



Medicines that affect the immune system

Some medications may reduce the immune system's response to vaccination.

However, getting vaccinated makes sure that people have some protection from becoming severely ill or dying from COVID-19 infection.



Severe anxiety about needles & medical visits

Severe anxiety about needles and medical visits is not usually a medical reason to be exempt from COVID-19 vaccination.

A person with severe anxiety about needles and medical visits should speak to their healthcare team to learn about what supports they can access.



Severe anxiety about needles & medical visits

Accommodations such as private rooms, a place to lie down, bringing a support person, and extra time can be offered at most vaccination sites.

It is important to consider that medical care due to COVID-19 will also be difficult for people with severe anxiety about needles and medical visits.



**If you believe you are exempt from the
COVID-19 vaccination for medical reasons
or Ontario Human Rights Code grounds**

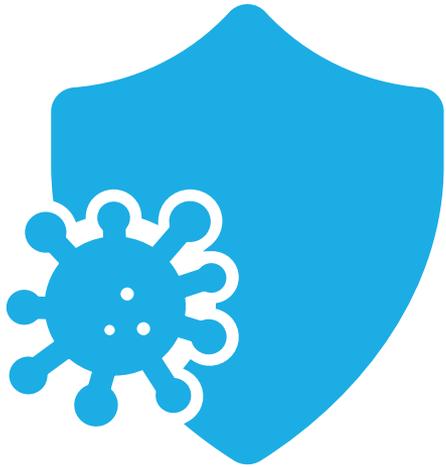
Contact:

Derek Leslie,

Occupational Health Nurse

derekleslie@stcatharines.ca

905.688.5601 ext.1481



Safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines

There are two preferred COVID-19 vaccines widely available to Canadians.

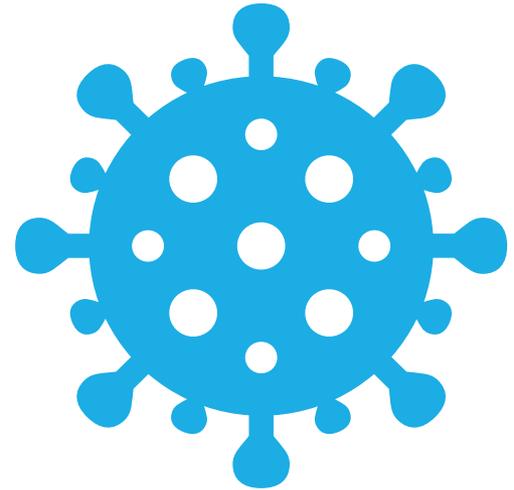
- **Moderna Spikevax®**
- **Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty®**

Both are mRNA vaccines.

mRNA vaccines are a new type of vaccine. They teach cells how to make a protein that will trigger an immune response.

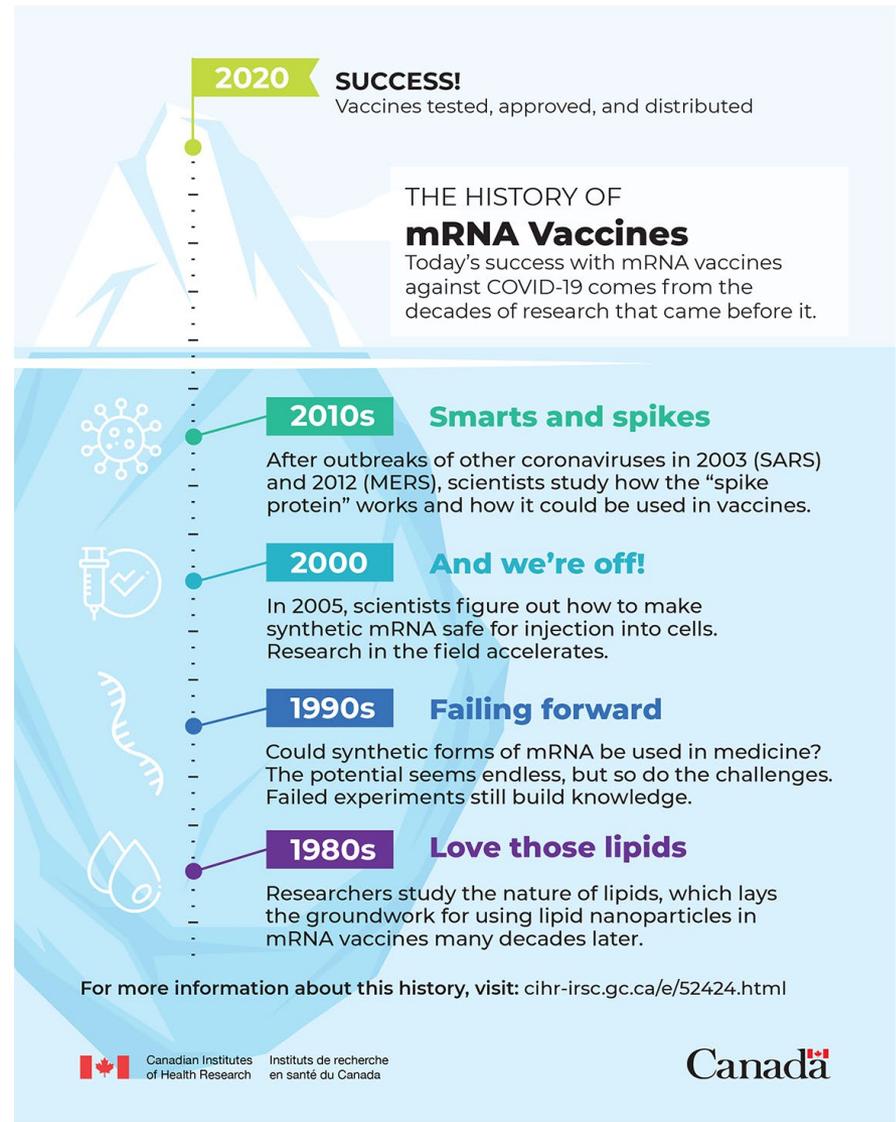
Once triggered, your body makes antibodies.

These antibodies help you fight the infection if the real virus does enter your body in the future.



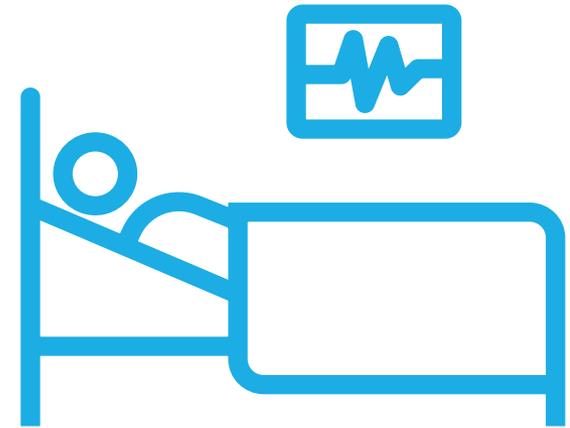
**mRNA vaccines are not live vaccines,
cannot cause infection in the host and
cannot alter a person's DNA.**

While the COVID-19 vaccines are the first to use mRNA, the technology is not new. Scientists have been studying mRNA and its potential for use in medicines for the last 30 years.



Source: <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/52424.html>

Despite this, many people are worried about the safety of COVID-19 vaccines and are hesitant to get vaccinated.



This leaves them vulnerable to infection, serious illness, hospitalization and death.

To help employees make an informed decision about vaccination, this module contains facts about vaccines to counter misinformation and myths circulating online and in the community.

Myth: I can get COVID-19 from the vaccine

You can't get COVID-19 from the vaccine.

mRNA vaccines don't use live virus to trigger an immune response.

Instead, they teach your cells how to make a protein that will trigger an immune response. Once triggered, your body makes antibodies.

These antibodies help you fight the infection if the real virus does enter your body in the future.

Source: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/covid19-industry/drugs-vaccines-treatments/vaccines/type-mrna.html>

Myth: Vaccines change a person's DNA

COVID-19 vaccines do not change a person's DNA.

The vaccine has a short amount of code to build the spike protein from the virus.

Think of the vaccine like a post-it note someone gives you. You see the note, remember it, and throw it out. The note doesn't change you, it just gives you some information to remember.

Similarly, the mRNA vaccine gives the body information to recognize a piece of the virus. The body then gets rid of the note but keeps the memory. When your body sees the virus in the future it's ready to fight.

Myth: Vaccines are experimental.

Both vaccines are fully approved for use in Canada.

The Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccines were authorized for use in Canada under the Interim Order respecting the importation, sale and advertising of drugs for use in relation to COVID-19.

The interim order expired on September 16, 2021. On this date, Moderna Spikevax® and Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty® transitioned to an authorization under the Food and Drug Regulations.

Source: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/covid19-industry/drugs-vaccines-treatments/vaccines.html>

Myth: Vaccines were developed too quickly

Vaccines were developed using the same protocols that are applied to other vaccines.

COVID vaccine research was much faster because of global co-operation, co-ordination, and investment. This meant the stages of research were better streamlined and allowed for the rapid recruitment of people into large, well-designed trials. There is also a lot of virus circulating in communities, which meant people who got a placebo vaccine got sick faster than usual. These things sped up the development and approval of vaccines.

mRNA vaccines are also much faster to manufacture than traditional vaccines.

Source: <https://uwaterloo.ca/news/news/q-and-experts-busting-common-myths-about-mrna-vaccines>

Myth: We need long term data on safety

The vaccines are safe — that was one of the main questions answered by the clinical trials.

Vaccine side effects usually occur within days of a vaccination, but some rare side effects may occur up to six weeks after the vaccination.

At the time of approval, both mRNA vaccines had at least six weeks of data in most participants. Now, we need data on a much larger group of people to identify any rare side effects that may occur in one in a million people.

With millions now receiving the vaccine, there have not been any major concerns, but regulators continue to monitor adverse event reporting programs around the world.

Source: <https://uwaterloo.ca/news/news/q-and-experts-busting-common-myths-about-mrna-vaccines>

Myth: Vaccines contain dangerous ingredients

There are no blood products, fetal cells, mercury, or formaldehyde.

These vaccines are generally considered to be “preservative free”.

They have the mRNA, which is wrapped in a fatty layer for protection.

There is also a common ingredient called polyethylene glycol (PEG) which helps to make the fatty layer, and salts, sugar, and water.

Myth: Vaccines contain dangerous ingredients

This is a list of the ingredients in the Pfizer vaccine:

- mRNA (medicinal ingredient)
- ALC-0315 = ((4-hydroxybutyl)azanediyl)bis(hexane-6,1-diyl)bis(2-hexyldecanoate)
- ALC-0159 = 2-[(polyethylene glycol)-2000]-N,N-ditetradecylacetamide
- 1,2-Distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine
- cholesterol
- dibasic sodium phosphate dihydrate
- monobasic potassium phosphate
- potassium chloride
- sodium chloride
- sucrose
- water for injection

Source: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/covid19-industry/drugs-vaccines-treatments/vaccines/pfizer-biontech.html#a4>

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- sucrose
- water for injection

These are lipids that are used to protect the mRNA & give it a greasy exterior, allowing it to slide into cells.

Source: <https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/HealthU/2021/01/11/a-simple-breakdown-of-the-ingredients-in-the-covid-vaccines/>

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These are salts to help balance the acidity in your body

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- cholesterol
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- sodium chloride
- sucrose
- water for injection

This is sugar to help molecules keep their shape during freezing.

Source: <https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/HealthU/2021/01/11/a-simple-breakdown-of-the-ingredients-in-the-covid-vaccines/>

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This is a list of the ingredients in the Moderna vaccine:

- mRNA (medicinal ingredient)
- 1,2-Distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine
- cholesterol
- lipid SM-102
- polyethylene glycol (PEG) 2000 DMG
- sodium acetate
- sucrose
- acetic acid
- tromethamine
- tromethamine hydrochloride
- water for injection

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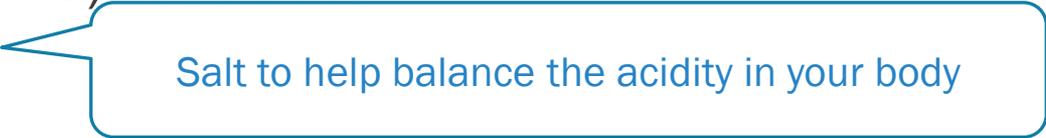
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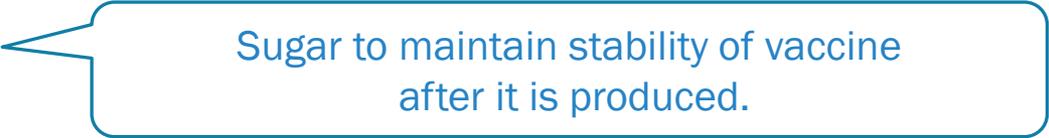


Salt to help balance the acidity in your body

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Sugar to maintain stability of vaccine
after it is produced.

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- sucrose
- acetic acid
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- tromethamine hydrochloride
- water for injection

Acids and acids stabilizers to maintain stability of vaccine after it is produced.

Myth: The side effects aren't worth it.

Side effects after vaccination are often part of the body's natural response to a vaccine.

Your body responds this way because it's working hard to build protection against the disease.

Common side effects of COVID-19 vaccination can last from a few hours to a few days, and include:

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Pain at the injection site

Myth: There's too many side effects

The benefits of vaccines authorized in Canada continue to outweigh the risks.

Of the 56,151,862 vaccine doses administered in Canada, side effects have been reported by 17,982 people. That's about three people out of every 10,000 people vaccinated.

Of the 17,982 individual reports, 13,307 were considered non-serious (0.024% of all doses administered) and 4,675 were considered serious (0.008% of all doses administered).

Myth: The vaccines are not effective

Vaccines are very effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalization and death from COVID-19.

There is a small percentage of the population who are vaccinated that will still be infected with COVID-19 if they're exposed to the virus. These are called breakthrough infections.

However, the risk of infection, hospitalization, and death are all much lower in vaccinated people compared to unvaccinated.

Myth: Vaccines don't work on Delta variant

Fully vaccinated people get COVID-19, including the Delta variant, less often than unvaccinated people.

In addition, unvaccinated people are more likely to be hospitalized with the Delta variant, than with the original Alpha variant.

Ongoing surveillance in Canada and around the world help determine whether changes to the virus or new variants will affect the effectiveness of vaccines.

Myth: I don't need to be vaccinated if everyone else is

Vaccination rates are not high enough globally or locally to protect unvaccinated individuals from COVID-19.

Most COVID-19 infections are in unvaccinated people. Cases among fully vaccinated individuals are far less likely.

When you get a COVID-19 vaccination, you're protecting yourselves from the risk of serious illness and death. You're also helping those who are unable to get vaccinated for medical reasons or children who are too young to receive the vaccine.

Myth: I don't need to be vaccinated if I already had COVID-19

You should get vaccinated, even if you have had COVID-19.

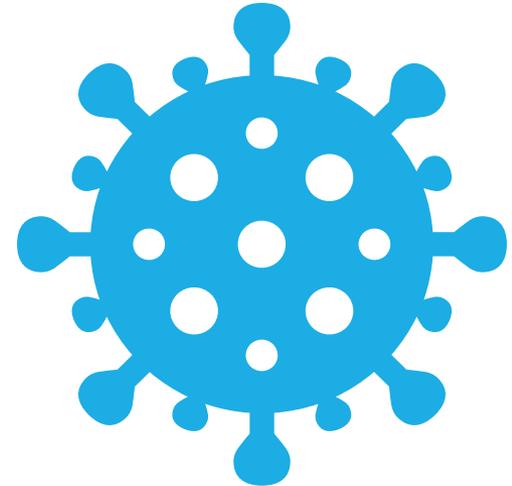
Regional, Provincial and Federal health authorities recommend vaccination for anyone who has previously had COVID-19. This is because it is unknown what the level of immunity is post infection and how long that immunity will last.

This position is supported by the World Health Organization and U.S. Centre for Disease Control.

Source: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/media-resources/science-in-5/episode-50--do-i-still-need-the-vaccine-if-i-have-covid-19>

<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/s0806-vaccination-protection.html>

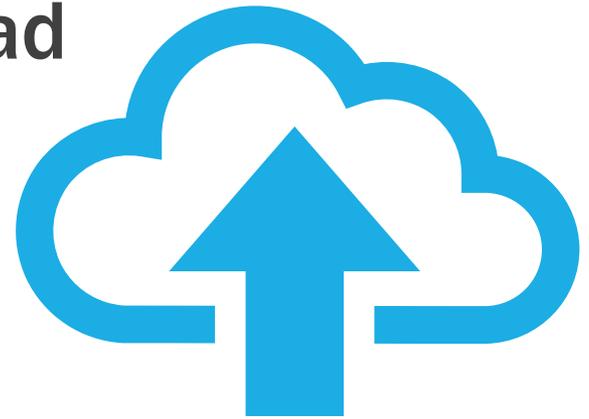
COVID-19 Employee Vaccination Policy



The goal of the City's vaccination policy is to maximize COVID-19 vaccination rates among City employees.

As a result, all employees, students and volunteers are required to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

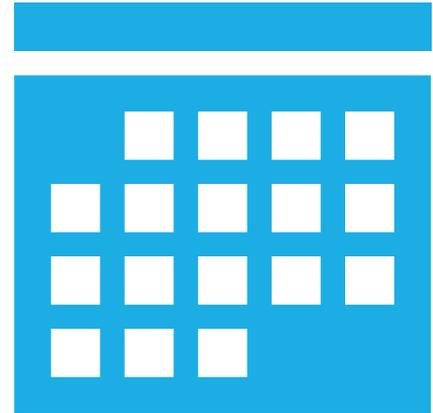
The City's vaccination policy requires employees to upload proof of COVID-19 vaccination using a secure portal by Oct. 8.



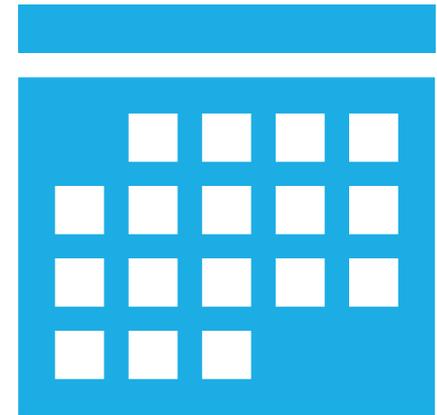
You can find the portal here:

www.stcatharines.ca/vaxconfirmation

Employees who do not provide proof of full vaccination by that date, have until **Monday, Nov. 1** to provide proof of their first dose.



**Failure to provide proof
of a first dose by this date
may result in discipline,
up to and including
termination.**



The policy also allows employees who are unsure about getting vaccinated, to take one hour of paid time to speak to their doctor.



Speak to you manager about arranging a time to see your doctor.

Got questions about the policy? Speak to your HR consultant.

CRCS & EFES

Email [Reva Eckhardt](#) or call ext. 1472

Municipal Works

Email [Megan Detlor](#) or call ext. 1478

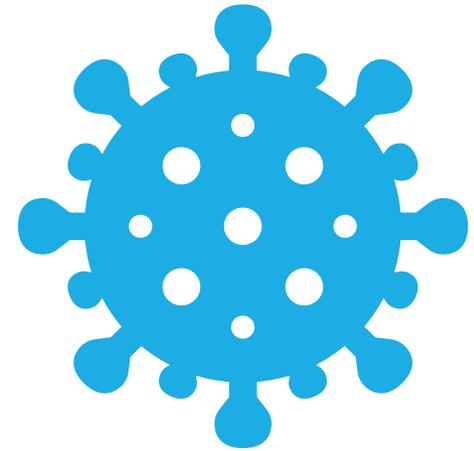
CSS, FMS & CAO

Email [Nada Habib](#) or call ext. 1485

Fire, LCS, PBS & EcDev

Email [Vicky Woolridge](#) or call ext. 1482

**Ready to roll up
your sleeve to
do your part to
fight COVID-19?**



COVID-19 vaccines are widely available in pharmacies and at vaccination clinics across Niagara.

To find a location near you visit:
<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/>

