WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE COVID-19 VACCINES

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COVID-19 vaccines will eventually be offered to all adults living in Canada. This fact sheet, verified by doctors, is the first in a series designed to give you accurate, verified medical information about these vaccines so you can make an informed choice.

Key Messages:

- The COVID-19 vaccine will help protect you from getting COVID-19. Two doses are needed.
- The COVID-19 vaccines have been extensively studied in diverse populations and are considered safe and highly effective.

Why Get the COVID-19 Vaccine?

- For many years, people around the world have used vaccines to protect us from deadly infectious illnesses, such as measles, tetanus and polio.
- The COVID-19 vaccine is the most effective way to protect yourself from getting COVID-19 and for us all to return to life as normal.
- The vaccine is an important part of stopping the spread of the virus to our families and communities, in addition to wearing masks, washing hands and staying at least 2 metres away from others.

How Does the Vaccine Work?

- Vaccines do not cure you, they help to prevent you from getting sick in the first place.
- The vaccine teaches your body what the COVID-19 virus looks like so your body can fight the virus if you come into contact with it.
- The COVID-19 vaccine does this by providing instructions ("mRNA") to your body to make spike proteins like those on top of the coronavirus. These proteins do not make you sick. Your body's immune system then makes antibodies to fight the infection if the real virus does enter your body in the future.

How Effective Are the Vaccines?

- Two vaccines are being offered in Canada so far, one by Pfizer/BioNTech and the other by Moderna.
- Both vaccines are considered very effective in preventing COVID-19 illness after two doses. They were found to be 95% effective in large scientific studies.

What Are the Side Effects of These Vaccines?

The COVID-19 vaccines are considered very safe. In general, the side effects observed during the large scientific studies are similar to what you might experience with other vaccines. They included things like shoulder/arm pain at the site of injection, body and muscle pains, chills, feeling tired and feeling feverish. These are common side effects of vaccines and do not pose a risk to health. If any of these is experienced, it will typically resolve in about a day or so. These symptoms may occur after both doses of the vaccine.

As with all vaccines, there's a very small chance of a more serious side effect, like an allergic reaction. This is why you will be asked to stay at the vaccination site (a clinic, or your doctor's office) for 15-30 minutes after getting the vaccine, so medical staff can take care of you.

You cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine.

Where Can I Learn More?

Health Canada has also carefully reviewed the available medical evidence and no major safety concerns have been identified. Health Canada's summary of the Pfizer BioNTech and Moderna vaccines in English and French are here:

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

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

The information in this bulletin has been validated by Canadian doctors: Meb Rashid MD, Assistant Professor, University of Toronto, Vanessa Redditt, MD, Lecturer, University of Toronto and Isaac I. Bogoch, MD, Associate Professor, University of Toronto