As of January 29, 2021

Updates and information about the COVID-19 pandemic change daily, and we understand you require the most current information as possible.

To help navigate these challenging times, we’ve put together this COVID-19 Vaccine Sequencing FAQ document to help address some of the latest questions staff might have about the COVID-19 vaccine. Please feel free to print and share as you see fit.

Visit ahs.ca/covidvaccine for regular updates and more information.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q1: UPDATED I’ve heard there is a vaccine shortage. What does this mean?

A: In order for Alberta Health Services (AHS) to respond to reduced supply of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in the coming weeks, adjustments are being made to the COVID-19 vaccine implementation plan.

Effective January 20, all first dose appointments for staff and physicians are postponed.

As of January 25, all second dose appointments for staff and physicians are being rescheduled to 38 – 42 days after the first dose was administered. In some instances that may mean moving an appointment just a few days.

Those who have already been sequenced for first dose appointments will maintain their place in the queue.

Q2: UPDATED How do I know if my vaccine appointment is being rescheduled? How do I rebook?

Anyone whose appointment is being postponed or rescheduled will be contacted directly by AHS via email, text or phone call.

A: If you booked using the online booking tool:

You need to rebook by going to your COVID-19 immunization confirmation email from AHS Booking and clicking on the link at the bottom of the email to modify your booking, or visit ahs.ca/updatebooking. You will still see your current appointment in the online booking tool but it will not be accommodated. It needs to be rescheduled to a later date.

Visit the FAQ page if you have questions about using the online booking tool.
If you were booked in the early phase, not through the online tool:

You will be contacted by text and automated phone call, not via email. We will ask you to either contact Health Link, or local public health directly (using a special phone number provided), to arrange the rebooking of your second dose appointment.

Our goal is to provide second doses within 42 days as directed by Alberta Health and recommended by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization.

Q3: Am I going to get my second dose?

A: Vaccine has been reserved to ensure that we are able to provide second doses within the allowable window.

Due to the extremely limited vaccine supply for the next few weeks, all healthcare workers requiring a second dose will be asked to rebook their appointment 38 to 42 days after their first dose. In some instances that may mean moving an appointment just a few days. Every day is critical to our current vaccine supply to ensure that all Albertans, including residents of long term care and designated supportive, can be immunized according to the recommended timelines.

We are working diligently and quickly to immunize as many people as possible with available vaccine and will continue to communicate openly and transparently.

We appreciate your patience and understanding as we work through details.

Q4: What happens if I miss my second dose?

A: All healthcare workers requiring a second dose will be asked to rebook their appointment 38 to 42 days after their first dose. In some instances that may mean moving an appointment just a few days.

Every day is critical to our current vaccine supply to ensure that all Albertans, including residents of long term care and designated supportive, can be immunized according to the recommended timelines.

If for some reason a staff member or physician cannot make it to their second dose appointment, and administration of the second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine is delayed, the second dose should be provided as soon as possible. The healthcare worker will have the opportunity to book another appointment as soon as supply and availability allows.

While there may be some protection provided by a single dose of COVID-19 vaccine, full protection with the current vaccines requires the completion of both doses.

Q5: How do I know if I am eligible to receive the vaccine?

A: Eligible healthcare workers receive a direct email to notify them they are eligible. However, the province is currently facing vaccine supply shortages due to a national shortage and no
vaccine is available at this time to book first dose appointments. By pausing first appointments, we can ensure enough vaccines are available to provide second doses within the recommended window for those that need them.

Key populations have been identified by Alberta Health to be included in the province's phased immunization program. Exact amounts and timelines are subject to change and the approach will be amended as needed, depending on vaccine supply.

We understand there are many people anxiously waiting to receive the vaccine. If you are a healthcare worker and have any questions about your eligibility, please do not call Health Link. We encourage you to continue checking ahs.ca/covidvaccine or alberta.ca/covid for more information as it becomes available.

Q6: I am eligible to receive the vaccine – how come I have not been contacted for booking an appointment yet?

A: In order for AHS to respond to the recently announced reductions in Pfizer vaccine in the upcoming weeks, adjustments are being made to the COVID-19 vaccine implementation plan. This means that effective January 20, all first dose appointments for staff and physicians are postponed.

We know many people are anxiously awaiting to receive the vaccine. Vaccine has been reserved to ensure that we are able to provide second doses within the allowable window. Our goal is to provide second doses within 42 days as directed by Alberta Health and recommended by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization.

Q7: Why am I not eligible to receive the vaccine? I think I should be.

A: With not enough vaccine to offer immunizations to everyone at the same time, Alberta Health established a phased approach aligned with anticipated vaccine supply.

Several named groups of healthcare workers were identified as part of key populations.

Healthcare workers identified for immunization in Phase 1 were selected to support acute care capacity and to protect populations at highest risk of severe outcomes. This includes those who provide care to residents in long term care and designated supportive, as well as home care staff, to help ensure their higher-risk clients can remain in their homes and prevent hospital admissions.

Healthcare workers, including physicians, were also sequenced with consideration of the extent to which immunizing a particular group would contribute to a combination of the following:

- Reducing acute care demand;
- Protecting critical workforce;
- Enhancing the flow of patients and residents through the system; and
- Preventing COVID-19 outbreaks.
Alberta Health is working to identify sequencing for Phase 2. When they have determined that more healthcare workers are eligible for immunization, AHS will broadly communicate when new appointments are available, and who is eligible to book an appointment. Your patience is appreciated while waiting to receive updates and more information.

Q8: If I’m not eligible now, when will I be eligible?

A: Work to identify sequencing for Phase 2 groups is underway by Alberta Health. Decision are expected in the coming weeks. Timing is yet to be determined, along with identifying which groups will be given priority.

We thank you for your patience as we work together through these challenging times. We are working diligently to immunize as many people as possible, as quickly as possible, with available vaccine and will continue to communicate openly and transparently.

There is currently no way to sign up to be waitlisted. Further information about booking options for future phases (1B, 2 and 3) will be communicated once available.

Members of the general public are not yet eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. We anticipate the vaccine will be available to the general public starting in Phase 3. We will continue to share more updates and information as it becomes available. Please continue to visit ahs.ca/covidvaccine and alberta.ca/covid for updates as they become available.

Q9: Where can I find more information and updates about the vaccine?

A: In addition to the COVID-19 updates, which are sent out via email, we encourage you to visit the Staff FAQ that is available and updated on a regular basis.

For information regarding the COVID-19 vaccine, please visit ahs.ca/covidvaccine, where information is updated regularly.

Alberta Health has recently posted a Q&A document for healthcare practitioners to the Alberta Immunization Policy webpage. In this document, you will find answers to several questions, including:

- How effective is the vaccine?
- How do we know the vaccine is safe when it was developed so quickly?
- Is it recommended to receive the vaccine while pregnant?

We have launched email intake systems for sequencing appeals, as well as sequencing related questions. Please be advised that email volumes are extremely high and responses may be delayed.

- Staff: ahsvaccinetaskforce@ahs.ca
- Physicians: cmo@ahs.ca