

COVID-19: Disruption of immunization schedules during the pandemic. Is a delay a problem?

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many pharmacists and other providers have stopped providing routine immunization to support reallocation of health care provider time and social distancing. Patients may have questions about the impact of a delay.

If a dose in a vaccine series is delayed, the vaccine series does not need to be restarted. The final antibody concentrations are not reduced for most multi-dose products. It is recommended to finish the series in the near future once COVID-19 issues have resolved since maximum protection may not occur until the vaccine series has been completed. Exceptions are the cholera and travellers' diarrhea vaccine and rabies vaccine for post-exposure prophylaxis. Doses for these should not be delayed.¹

It may be possible to adjust the timing of scheduled vaccines as long as the injection series is eventually completed. Consult the [Canadian immunization Guide](#) for more detailed guidance on specific vaccines.

For example, the recombinant herpes zoster vaccine has a 2-dose schedule, with the second dose given at any time 2 to 6 months after the first. However, the [Canadian Immunization Guide](#) states the second dose could be administered at 12 months.²

Consider scheduling vaccinations at times when appropriate screening can occur.

If immunization must proceed, health care providers should practice proper hand hygiene. Consider using personal protective equipment as appropriate.

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References

1. Public Health Agency of Canada. National Advisory Committee on Immunization. [Timing of vaccine administration](#): Canadian immunization guide. Evergreen ed. Available from: www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/canadian-immunization-guide.html
2. Public Health Agency of Canada. National Advisory Committee on Immunization. [Herpes zoster \(shingles\) vaccine](#): Canadian immunization guide. Evergreen ed. Available from: www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/canadian-immunization-guide.html