



Canadian
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Association
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du Canada

The Weekly

Latest pharmacy developments in response to COVID-19

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CPhA

CPhA webinar offers advice on getting ready to vaccinate

Offering COVID-19 immunization at a community pharmacy involves a lot of planning and logistics. Using good booking software, making sure there is flow in the clinic and adjusting staffing to avoid burnout are all important to ensure an immunization clinic is a success, reports [Canadian Healthcare Network](#). The article offers advice from pharmacists across the country, and features information from CPhA's recent webinar, Preparing Your Pharmacy to Deliver COVID-19 Vaccinations: Tips from the Front Line. The recording can be accessed [here](#).

CPhA's COVID-19 web pages are being updated regularly at www.pharmacists.ca/covid19 and www.pharmacists.ca/covid19fr.

Pharmacy on the front line

Cape Breton pharmacist rides to the rescue with mobile COVID-19 vaccine clinic

Michael Hatt, a pharmacist in Port Hawkesbury, NS, has been inoculating residents around Cape Breton for months after buying an old ambulance on Kijiji and converting it into a mobile clinic, [reports the Globe and Mail](#). In rural communities where basic medical services are often a long distance away, his big, white truck has become a popular option for the elderly and people with mobility issues. Hatt plans to take his vaccination clinic on the road soon, to reach people unable to drive to get their COVID-19 shot. "Every day, we're getting more and more calls from people

asking us to come to their home. There are a lot of people who are housebound,” he said. “When things die down a bit, we’re going to hit the road and get those people who were left behind.”

What’s the cure for vaccine-rollout hiccups? NB pharmacist has some thoughts

Kevin Duplisea, who worked in the ICU trenches during the SARS outbreak in Ontario and writes a column for the New Brunswick Pharmacists’ Association (NBPA), now administers COVID-19 vaccines at Sharp’s Corner Drug Store in Sussex, NB; some 60 to 90 of them a day, in fact. He has also administered his fair share of flu shots and [spoke with CBC](#) on how things are different from other mass immunization campaigns and why.

Provincial

COVID-19 vaccination in community pharmacies across Canada

The COVID-19 vaccine rollout hit some speedbumps in the last week, as a number of provinces changed policies about giving the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine. Provinces were following [guidance issued](#) on March 29 from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) to pause giving the vaccine to those under 55 years of age. Many provinces had already started to give the vaccine to people younger than 55. While some had provided the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine to front-line workers in immunization clinics, Prince Edward Island had been giving it to people aged 18-29 in pharmacies. NACI’s recommended pause also means the vaccine can now be [offered in pharmacies in British Columbia](#), as doses previously reserved for front-line workers and workplace settings, where many people are under 55 years old, could be sent to pharmacies instead. Here’s what’s happening across Canada in each province and territory as compiled by [Canadian Healthcare Network](#) (subscriber access only).

Ontario pharmacists ready to support expanded vaccine rollout

Ontario’s pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and interns are ready to support an expanded and expedited vaccination rollout as the Ontario government prepares to rapidly expand access to COVID-19 vaccines, including to essential workers, according to a [joint news release](#) from the Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA) and the Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada (NPAC). Since pharmacies started COVID-19 vaccinations last month, almost 165,000 shots have been administered through community pharmacies in the first phase of the pharmacy launch, representing 100% of the vaccines allocated. Ontario’s pharmacists have proven their ability to safely and efficiently provide COVID-19 vaccinations as a key player in the immunization rollout.

PEI bringing back AstraZeneca vaccine for older Islanders at pharmacies

PEI’s chief public health officer, Dr. Heather Morrison, says Islanders over the age of 55 may book an appointment at one of 12 PEI pharmacies to receive an AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, [according to the CBC](#). The province’s allotment of the AstraZeneca vaccine was originally set aside for younger people working directly with the public, since at first it had not

been approved in Canada for people over 65. Health Canada removed that restriction in mid-March. Use of the AstraZeneca vaccine for Canadians under 55 was [suspended in late March](#) due to evidence linking it to blood clots in some people who received it elsewhere around the world. Dr. Morrison said some Islanders over 55 may be able to get an earlier appointment for an AstraZeneca vaccine from one of the 12 participating pharmacies, instead of waiting for an appointment to receive a Pfizer or Moderna shot at a public clinic.

National

Tam says younger, healthier people need intensive care quickly with variants of COVID-19

Canada's Public Health Officer said there were an average of 6,100 new cases of COVID-19 a day over the last week and 31 deaths, up from 4,600 new cases and 26 deaths a week earlier, [says the Canadian Press](#). But the hospitalization numbers concern Dr. Teresa Tam the most, and the share of hospitalized patients who need critical care is growing fastest. In the last week, the number of people in Canadian hospitals with COVID-19 rose 4% to an average of 2,400 people a day, she said. At the same time, the number of people in ICU grew by 18% to 780 people. That means about 1 in every 3 patients hospitalized with COVID-19 now need critical care. In mid-January, when hospitalizations during the second wave of the pandemic peaked at 4,775, about one-fifth, or 880 people, were in the ICU.

Almost 2.2 million more vaccine doses coming this week as COVID-19 cases spike

More than 2 million vaccine doses are set to arrive in Canada this week as the country scrambles to contain the wildfire spread of more contagious variants of the COVID-19 virus, [reports the Canadian Press](#). That includes the first batch of 316,800 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine to be sent to Canada from the global vaccine-sharing initiative known as the COVAX Facility. In addition, Canada is to receive 1,019,070 doses of the Pfizer vaccine and 855,600 doses of the Moderna vaccine over the next 7 days. That's almost 2.2 million doses in total, following a peak of more than 3 million doses last week. By the end of the first quarter, Canada had received a total of 9.5 million doses, far more than the 6 million originally promised by the federal government despite production disruptions that slowed vaccine supply in February and early March.

International

Americans prefer vaccination at pharmacies over expensive mega-sites

The Biden administration is rethinking a costly system of government-run mass vaccination sites after data revealed the program is lagging well behind a much cheaper federal effort to distribute doses via retail pharmacies, [according to Politico](#). Despite the money the federal government has spent on the mass-vaccination pilot sites, they are administering just a fraction of the shots given across the country each day. Federal data show that the retail pharmacy program, which has signed up 21 chains and 17,000 stores, can reach far more Americans in a shorter time, according to 4 senior officials with direct knowledge of the matter. The bottom line, those sources

said, is that more Americans seem to be willing to walk to their local pharmacist to get the vaccine than to travel to a federal vaccination site for the shot.

US: Pharmacies score customer data in vaccine effort: Some are crying foul

Millions of Americans streaming through retail pharmacies to receive COVID-19 vaccines have no choice but to hand over their personal information to those companies, raising red flags for privacy watchdogs who are pressing for oversight of how the pharmacies may use the data bonanza to boost their profits, [Politico reports](#). While providing vaccinations themselves is not a major money maker for the retailers, they have been able to scoop up data on new customers that could prove to be valuable. Privacy watchdog groups and some members of Congress have expressed concern about whether the pharmacy chains will use that data for marketing, like selling ibuprofen or other products to deal with the after-effects of the shots. The pharmacies say the data they are collecting are important for efficiently getting people in for vaccinations and that they are following health privacy rules. And some privacy attorneys point out that pharmacies have wide latitude to collect and use customer data, so long as they're not mining sensitive health information.

US: Walgreens changes timing on Pfizer vaccine second doses

Walgreens has inoculated hundreds of thousands of Americans against COVID-19 this year using the Pfizer vaccine. But the pharmacy chain has not been following guidance from federal health officials about the timing of second doses, [says the New York Times](#). People are supposed to get 2 doses, 3 weeks apart. Walgreens, however, separated them by 4 weeks because that made it faster and simpler for the company to schedule appointments. Walgreens' decision, which it didn't publicly announce, confused some customers and caught the attention of federal health officials at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), which asked Walgreens to stop using a longer-than-recommended period between doses. The company's vaccine-scheduling system by default schedules all second doses 4 weeks after the first. Doses of Moderna's vaccine, which Walgreens is also administering, are supposed to be spaced 4 weeks apart. Using the same gap for both vaccines was "the easiest way to stand up the process based on our capabilities at the time," Dr. Kevin Ban, Walgreens' chief medical officer, said in an interview. Now Walgreens is changing its system. Starting as soon as the end of the week, the pharmacy will automatically schedule people for Pfizer doses 3 weeks apart, Ban said.

Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine protects for 6 months or more, study shows

The Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine affords at least 6 months of protection after the second dose, the company announced April 1, as [reported by Medscape](#). The vaccine was 91.3% effective against COVID-19 in an analysis of 927 symptomatic people through March 13, as indicated by real-world data compiled since the vaccine was given emergency use authorization. This compares to 95% efficacy reported in the [interim results](#) that were announced on November 18, 2020. Furthermore, data released show that the vaccine affords 100% protection against severe COVID-19, as defined by the CDC.

In-depth

What we know about J&J's single-dose vaccine, set to arrive at the end of April

Canada will soon add another COVID-19 vaccine to its supply, with procurement minister Anita Anand announcing last week that initial shipments of Johnson & Johnson's (J&J) single-dose vaccine are to arrive by the end of April. This addition gives Canada 4 distinct vaccines, and J&J's 1-and-done element adds flexibility to the country's plan to immunize the majority of its residents by September. The Canadian Press [offers a primer](#) on what we know about Johnson & Johnson's vaccine.

Worth repeating

"Quantity matters, but so does using vaccines as effectively as possible. That means not only getting shots into arms, but into the right arms at the right time." — The Globe and Mail's André Picard [writes](#) that we need to be more aggressive and innovative in how we deliver vaccines as the number of them available grows substantially.

This weekly COVID-19 update is compiled by the Canadian Pharmacists Association. Please note that this publication is meant to inform and is not a comprehensive list of information available. Be sure to check with your provincial regulatory authority or advocacy association for province-specific information. While we aim to ensure all information contained in this update is accurate, the situation is evolving rapidly and CPhA does not take responsibility for the content provided by other organizations and sources.

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