



Canadian
Pharmacists
Association
Association des
pharmaciens
du Canada

The Weekly

Latest pharmacy developments in response to COVID-19

March 31, 2021

CPhA

Pharmacy involvement in COVID vaccination: New national chart

CPhA has developed a new national map graphic summarizing pharmacy's involvement in COVID-19 vaccine rollout in Canada. The map, which will be updated every Monday due to the rapidly changing nature of the topic, can be [found here](#).

Webinar recording available: Preparing your pharmacy to deliver COVID-19 vaccinations

On March 24, CPhA presented Preparing Your Pharmacy to Deliver COVID-19 Vaccinations: Tips From the Front Line. Our panel of community pharmacists from across the country shared how they are preparing to vaccinate their patients against COVID-19. Panellists discussed their own preparations and provided practical tips on managing patient volume and expectations, staffing, workflow, and other considerations. The webinar recording is available on the [CPhA website](#).

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

Provincial

BC pharmacies offering COVID-19 vaccines

BC is now offering COVID-19 vaccines to Lower Mainland residents aged 55 to 65, [reports the Vancouver Sun](#). Starting March 31, eligible residents can call their local pharmacy to make an appointment to get their AstraZeneca vaccine. [About 150 pharmacies are participating](#) in this partnership with Immunize BC. Drop-in service may also be an option, said the health ministry. The provincial government is targeting this cohort to try to stem the high number of COVID-19 cases in the Lower Mainland. "Pharmacies are ready to help stop the spread of COVID-19 in BC by beginning to offer vaccinations by local pharmacists near where people live," said Annette Robinson, president, BC Pharmacy Association, [in a news release](#). "Pharmacists have done vaccinations since 2009 and safely delivered more than 1 million flu shots to British Columbians this past flu season."

Pharmacies participating in expanded AB vaccine rollout

The Government of Alberta announced that the province's vaccine rollout is expanding, eventually making more than 945,000 Albertans with underlying health conditions eligible to book COVID-19 shots. People born in 1963 or before with eligible underlying health conditions will be able to book appointments through participating pharmacies that have vaccine supplies in Calgary, Edmonton and Red Deer, the province said in a [news release](#). As more supply becomes available, other pharmacies will begin to offer bookings, the news release said.

Nearly 3 dozen Ottawa pharmacies to get COVID-19 vaccine doses

Doses of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine are slated to arrive at 34 pharmacies in Ottawa, which could be offering shots as soon as next week, according to the Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA). Those pharmacies are in the process of signing user agreements as part of the [second phase of the vaccine pilot project](#), OPA CEO Justin Bates told [CBC News](#). An announcement about which specific pharmacies were chosen is expected sometime this week, Bates said. The selection process was made with equity in mind, he added, and included considerations like whether the pharmacies were independent or part of a corporation, as well as where they're geographically located.

PEI suspends AstraZeneca vaccine program at pharmacies for ages 18 to 29

PEI is suspending its use of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine for 18- to 29-year-olds, [reports CBC](#), in the wake of Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunization's recommendation that the vaccine should not be given to those under the age of 55 because of safety concerns. The province had set aside its AstraZeneca vaccines for people aged 18 to 29 who are working directly with the public. It was being delivered exclusively by pharmacists in the province at 6 pharmacies, separately from the provincially run vaccination clinics. Erin MacKenzie, executive director of the PEI Pharmacists Association, [confirmed to the Charlottetown Guardian](#) that because the AstraZeneca vaccine is on temporary hold, no vaccinations are being provided in pharmacies at this time. The vaccine is on hold while the manufacturer conducts an assessment of the benefit versus the risk of giving the vaccine by age and gender.

Canada pauses AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine use for those under 55, wants new risk analysis

Canadian health officials said on March 29 they would stop offering AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine to people under age 55 and require a new analysis of the shot's risks and benefits based on age and gender, [according to Reuters](#). The moves follow reports from Europe of rare but serious blood clots, bleeding and in some cases death after vaccination, mainly in young women. No such cases have been reported in Canada, with about 307,000 AstraZeneca doses administered. In response to NACI's guidance, Canada's Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health, which includes provincial and federal representatives, said it would pause the vaccine for those under 55. The council said it considered the fact that Canada had other vaccines available when making the decision. Most of Canada's supply has so far come from Pfizer and Moderna. Separately, Health Canada said it would add terms and conditions to the AstraZeneca vaccine's authorizations, including "a requirement that the manufacturers conduct a detailed assessment of the benefits and risks of the vaccine by age and sex in the Canadian context."

Pfizer to send 5 million additional COVID-19 vaccine doses to Canada in June

Canada's promised spring supply of COVID-19 vaccines grew on March 30, with millions of additional doses now expected to arrive from 3 different suppliers before Canada Day, [reports the Canadian Press](#). Pfizer will send another 5 million doses of its mRNA vaccine to Canada in June, bringing its total shipments in the spring to 17.8 million. The company is expected to ship more than 1 million doses a week in April and May, and more than 2 million every week in June. Procurement Minister Anita Anand added that Canada now expects 4.4 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine by June 30, and said the first shipments of Johnson & Johnson's (J&J) single-dose vaccine are set to arrive at the end of April. She doesn't know yet how many doses will be in that first shipment. Even without J&J, and barring any unexpected interruptions in production or export of vaccines, Canada is in line to get more than 44 million doses before July 1.

COVID-19 variant-driven third wave hits middle-aged adults hard

Canada's third wave of COVID-19 is escalating at an alarming rate, driven by variants that are sending more middle-aged people to hospital, just as the country's immunization experts recommend against giving the AstraZeneca vaccine to anyone under the age of 55, [says the Globe and Mail](#). Cases are increasing at such a fast rate in British Columbia that the government has imposed the strictest restrictions since the beginning of the pandemic. In Ontario, a new report shows variant infections are sending more people in their 40s and 50s to intensive-care units than earlier incarnations of the coronavirus. "The third wave is really different, especially from the first wave," said Katharina Plenk, chief and medical director of the department of medicine at Cortellucci Vaughan Hospital, a facility north of Toronto designated for COVID-19 patients. "Definitely there is a signal there that this is affecting a younger population. This is obviously something that hits close to home, and it's been very scary to see."

International

Pfizer says COVID-19 vaccine safe and 100% effective on 12- to 15-year-olds in new trial

Pfizer said on March 31 its COVID-19 vaccine is safe and effective and produced robust antibody responses in 12- to 15-year-olds, paving the way for it to seek US emergency use authorization in weeks, [Reuters reports](#). Pfizer hopes that vaccinations of the group could begin before the next school year, said Albert Bourla, Pfizer's chairman and chief executive. Pfizer's vaccine is already authorized for use in people starting at age 16. The new study offers the first evidence of how the vaccine will work in school-age adolescents. In the trial of 2260 adolescents aged 12 to 15, there were 18 cases of COVID-19 in the group that got a placebo shot and none in the group that got the vaccine, resulting in 100% efficacy in preventing COVID-19.

US: Expansion of pharmacy vaccine program brings COVID-19 goals closer to reality

The American Pharmacists Association (APhA) [cheered the White House's move](#) to fully activate the pharmacies in the Federal Retail Pharmacy Program, part of the national COVID-19 vaccination strategy. By April 19, Americans will have access to the COVID-19 vaccine in 40,000 pharmacies across the country. "President Biden did the nation a huge favor by more than doubling the number of pharmacies that will receive COVID-19 vaccines under the federal program," said APhA Executive Vice President and CEO Scott J. Knoer. "For so many of our nation's most vulnerable populations, pharmacies' full participation in COVID-19 vaccination efforts could mean the difference between life and death." Approximately 90% of Americans live within 5 miles of a pharmacy, and most Americans see their pharmacists more than any other health provider each year.

Ireland: Pharmacists call for urgent clarity on when they can begin vaccinating against COVID-19

Pharmacists in Ireland are still in the dark as to when they can begin administering the COVID-19 vaccine. This is [according to the Irish Pharmacy Union](#) (IPU), which has called on the Minister for Health and the Health Service Executive (HSE) to urgently clarify when pharmacists can begin vaccinating the public. IPU Secretary General Darragh O'Loughlin outlined the concerns of community pharmacists, saying, "Pharmacists are increasingly frustrated at the complete lack of clarity on when they can begin vaccinating their patients and the broader public. The Government has set ambitious targets on providing 1 million vaccines per month from April. We have over 1850 community pharmacies in Ireland, most of which will play a vital role in helping to achieve this target." However, despite being ready and waiting to vaccinate people within their local communities, they still have no information on when they will begin vaccinating, O'Loughlin added.

Northern Ireland: Community pharmacies join vaccination program

Health Minister Robin Swann has [announced](#) that community pharmacies across Northern Ireland have joined the COVID-19 vaccination program, which will bring the life-saving vaccination drive to many local high streets and urban and rural neighbourhoods. The plan will

see hundreds of community pharmacies provide vaccinations to members of the public, complementing the work of GP practices and vaccination centres. Over 300 pharmacies have signed up to be part of the program.

'Real-world' study by CDC shows Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are 90% effective

A new [study](#) suggests the vaccines produced by Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech appear to be 90% effective in preventing COVID-19 infection in a real-world setting. The study was released on March 29 in Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, an online journal published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The study followed nearly 4000 health-care workers, first responders and other essential workers in 8 US locations as the first COVID-19 vaccines were rolled out starting in December. Participants were tested weekly to look for all cases of COVID infection, even asymptomatic ones.

In-depth

Overflow lists and creative solutions: How provinces are using up leftover vaccines

Despite strict protocols surrounding the distribution of precious COVID-19 vaccines, sometimes there are unused vials remaining at the end of the day. The reasons for the surplus vary, as do the strategies being used to avoid waste. Oftentimes, unfilled appointments and last-minute cancellations come up against vaccine expiry dates, leading to the leftovers. [Here's how some provinces](#), including participating pharmacies, are handling leftover doses.

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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