



Canadian  
Pharmacists  
Association

Association des  
pharmaciens  
du Canada

# The Weekly

Latest pharmacy developments in response to COVID-19

**May 5, 2021**

## **CPhA**

### ***CPhA expresses disappointment with NACI messaging on vaccine recommendations***

CPhA expressed disappointment in [new messaging](#) communicated May 3 by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) on vaccine recommendations, which is causing additional confusion for many Canadians. In a [statement](#) released May 3, CPhA said: "While we recognize the importance of transparent information about the risks and benefits of approved vaccines, we believe that effective messaging is critical to instilling vaccine confidence, helping Canadians contextualize the risks, and should be developed with the input of health professionals who are ultimately administering vaccines to Canadians and directly addressing their concerns." Phil Emberley, acting director of professional affairs for CPhA, worries that the NACI advice will make more Canadians hesitate to get vaccinated. In an [interview with the Canadian Press](#), he said that when you weigh the risks that come with COVID-19 against the risks of any of the vaccines Canada has authorized, preventing the virus is always the better choice. Emberley says he got the AstraZeneca vaccine himself 3 weeks ago and has no regrets or concerns that he should have held out for a different vaccine.

### ***Updated chart: Pharmacy involvement in COVID-19 vaccination***

As COVID-19 vaccination rollouts continue, CPhA is making weekly updates to our Pharmacy Involvement in COVID Vaccination map, staying on top of the role pharmacists are playing in the vaccination effort. The graphic is available in [English](#) and [French](#).

## Provincial

### ***More pharmacies join SK vaccine rollout***

A small army of pharmacies have joined Saskatchewan's inoculation efforts. More than 200 pharmacies across 57 communities are now offering vaccines, up from the 63 pharmacies in 14 communities that began vaccinating in late April as part of a pilot project, [says the Leader Post](#). Pharmacy Association of Saskatchewan (PAS) executive director Dawn Martin said the pharmacies' vaccine program could scale up even further if supply allows. She said pharmacies could eventually administer as many as 70,000 doses a week if there are enough vaccines. "We're trying to find the balance between what the (Saskatchewan Health Authority) system is doing and what pharmacies are doing, and I think the system is really happy to see pharmacies coming on to allow them to, at some point, get back to some of the other work they need to do as well," Martin said.

### ***Independent pharmacies dropped from ON pilot at last minute***

Some Ontario independent pharmacists are feeling snubbed by recent vaccine rollout choices, [reports Canadian Healthcare Network](#) (subscription required). Last week, Ontario announced that a pilot program could see a handful of pharmacies test out administering the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. Certain independent pharmacies say they were initially meant to be part of the project but were dropped. "On Tuesday, I got a call saying our store got dropped from the list," Medhat Gerges, owner of Weston Jane Pharmacy, said. Justin Bates, CEO of the Ontario Pharmacists Association says the association was given a short list of locations from which to choose pharmacies to participate. From those choices, OPA selected 8 independent and 8 corporate locations. "We always advocate for a level playing field and to have equitable representation," Bates said. However, after receiving the OPA's recommendations, Public Health chose just 4 independent locations and 12 corporate ones. Bates called the lack of balance "unfortunate," but noted the pilot should last only 2 weeks and quickly expand from there, adding that more than 1,000 pharmacies in Ontario are currently queued up, waiting for the call to administer vaccines.

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## National

### ***Trudeau says all vaccines are safe and effective after NACI guidance causes confusion***

After NACI stated that viral vector COVID-19 vaccines like those offered by AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson are not the "preferred" products, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau sought to reassure Canadians that all vaccines approved for use in this country are safe and effective, [reports CBC](#). Speaking to reporters at a COVID-19 briefing May 4, Trudeau said Canadians should have no qualms about receiving a dose of the AstraZeneca product. With Canada in the middle of a third wave of the pandemic, Trudeau said it is prudent for people to get the first shot

offered to them to help drive down case counts and hospitalizations. “Make sure you get your shot when it’s your turn. We are continuing to recommend to everyone to get vaccinated as quickly as possible so we can get through this,” Trudeau said. “The impacts of catching COVID are far greater and far deadlier, as we’ve seen across the country, than potential side effects. Let me remind everyone that every vaccine administered in Canada is safe and effective, as evaluated by Health Canada.”

### ***Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine approved for Canadians aged 12 and over, Health Canada says***

Health Canada has authorized the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for adolescents aged 12 to 15, meaning that the shot is now approved for anyone over the age of 12 in Canada, [reports Global News](#). Until now, the vaccine had only been approved for Canadians over the age of 16. “This is the first vaccine authorized in Canada for the prevention of COVID-19 in children, and marks a significant milestone in Canada’s fight against the pandemic,” said Health Canada’s Chief Medical Advisor Dr. Supriya Sharma. Canada is the first country in the world to extend this approval to children, Sharma added. The announcement comes after the drug makers said their vaccine was found to be safe, effective and produced robust antibody responses in 12- to 15-year-olds in a clinical trial late last month.

### ***Canada to receive 2M vaccine doses this week as Pfizer-BioNTech ramps up deliveries***

Canada is set to begin receiving more than 2 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine each week as production is ramped up and deliveries begin shipping from the US, [says the Canadian Press](#). Pfizer-BioNTech has been consistently delivering around 1 million doses from Brussels each week since mid-March, but those numbers will double over the next month before increasing further in June. There was no immediate word, however, on progress in talks with the US over the provision of more doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, which is in high demand across the country. Federal Public Service and Procurement Minister Anita Anand said on April 30 that Ottawa was “being very aggressive, especially with the supplier.” US President Joe Biden suggested last month that the US could share its stockpile of tens of millions of AstraZeneca shots, which health officials there have not yet approved for use.

### ***Contentious antibody treatment getting clinical trial in BC***

In a clinic in Surrey, BC, some newly diagnosed COVID-19 patients are receiving a therapy that few other Canadians can get, [reports CTV](#). The Canadian-made treatment is called bamlanivimab and involves infusing patients with monoclonal antibodies within 3 days of testing positive, all with the aim of preventing the illness from becoming life-threatening. Bamlanivimab has been approved and used around the world in more than 400,000 patients, but the treatment is contentious due to recent concerns from Health Canada and the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regarding its effectiveness. Yet, despite concerns that the drug doesn’t work against some of the new variants, it does help prevent patients infected with the variant first identified in the UK from ending up in hospital with severe disease — something many doctors across the country say is critical, considering that B.1.1.7 is the dominant variant circulating in

Canada.

### ***Relatively few COVID-19 cases reported after receiving first vaccine dose, data show***

Only a small percentage of the millions of Canadians who've received their first vaccine dose have gone on to develop COVID-19, data show, and an even smaller share of that total have fallen seriously ill or died—proof of the benefits of doling out first doses fast, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) says. [The Globe and Mail](#) reports that nearly 2,300 Canadians have contracted the virus more than 2 weeks after receiving their first dose of a coronavirus vaccine, or 1.3% of cases since the vaccine rollout began, according to PHAC. At least 53 of those people have died because of COVID-19. The new data serve as a reminder that the first dose doesn't provide foolproof protection against severe outcomes of COVID-19, which helps explain why public-health officials have urged Canadians to keep their guard up until they receive a second injection.

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## **International**

### ***FDA expected to OK Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for teens within week***

The FDA is expected to authorize Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine for youth aged 12 to 15 by next week, according to a federal official and a person familiar with the process. It is expected that shots will be set up for many in this age group before the beginning of the next school year, [reports the Associated Press](#). The announcement is expected to come a month after the company found that its shot, which is already authorized for those aged 16 and older, also provides protection for the younger group. The federal official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to preview the FDA's action, said the agency is expected to expand its emergency use authorization for Pfizer-BioNTech's 2-dose vaccine by early next week, and perhaps even sooner

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## **Pharmacy on the front line**

### ***Pharmacy student/Paralympian hoping to help in Canada's immunization efforts***

As an elite athlete, Kamyille Frenette appreciates the value of meticulously practising. So in her other life as a pharmacy student, she didn't mind thrusting a needle into the skin of an orange over and over again while learning the skills needed to do a very important job, [reports the Globe and Mail](#). The 24-year-old para triathlete from Dieppe, NB, is training for the biggest competition of her life — this summer's Tokyo Paralympics. At the same time, she's training to become a pharmacist and a certified vaccinator, hoping to help in Canada's immunization efforts against COVID-19. Frenette, a biology graduate from Université de Moncton, is in her third year of the pharmacy program at Dalhousie University in Halifax. "I want to jump in and do my part in helping Nova Scotia and Canada to get past this," Frenette said. She sees people asking their pharmacist about the safety of the COVID-19 vaccine. "The vaccine is super important," Frenette said. "I advocate for the vaccine, I will take the vaccine, my family is taking the vaccine and I really trust it."

## ***Kyro Maseh goes above and beyond to get COVID-19 vaccine shots to those in need***

Pharmacist Kyro Maseh and the staff at the Lawlor Pharmasave in the Beaches neighbourhood of Toronto have gone above and beyond to make sure as many people as possible receive the COVID-19 vaccine. That has been especially true of his efforts to help get essential workers vaccinated. “All pharmacists are trying to make the process as easy as possible,” said Maseh in an [interview with Beach Metro News](#) on April 29. “We prioritized people who we felt should be prioritized. We prioritized teachers and frontline and essential workers.” Earlier in April the pharmacy celebrated giving out its 1,000th dose of vaccine. “Things took off when we celebrated the 1,000th dose. That went viral. It was a nice way to celebrate and raise spirits of the staff and the people getting vaccinated,” said Maseh.

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## **In-depth**

### ***What Canadians should know about each authorized COVID-19 vaccine***

Canada is expecting to receive more than 2 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine each week through June and an additional 1 million doses from Moderna next week. With 4 COVID-19 vaccines now authorized for use in Canada, who will become eligible to receive which vaccines and where can they get one? In [this explainer](#), CTV News outlines which groups are recommended to be eligible to receive which vaccines, where they'll be able to get one, and how many doses Canada has received to date and will be receiving in the future.

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## **Worth repeating**

“The most important thing is to get vaccinated with the first vaccine offered to you. It is how we get through this. Every vaccine for use in Canada has been judged safe and effective by Health Canada.” —Prime Minister Justin Trudeau [at a press briefing](#) May 4, reassuring Canadians that all vaccines approved for use in Canada are safe and effective.

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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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