

Public Health Alert

To: Ottawa Physicians and Nurse Practitioners
Date: October 05, 2023
From: Dr. Trevor Arnason, Associate Medical Officer of Health
Subject: **Update on Fall 2023 COVID-19 Vaccine Recommendations in Ottawa**

La version française sera disponible sur [notre site web](#) dès que possible.

Dear Colleagues,

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) has received a limited supply of Moderna XBB 1.5 and has begun distributing initial doses to Hospitals and Long-Term Care Homes, as per Provincial direction.

OPH is planning to distribute XBB.1.5-containing COVID-19 mRNA vaccine products to community COVID-19 vaccine providers and to provide the vaccine in OPH clinics in mid to late October. Community COVID-19 vaccine providers can expect to start ordering the week of October 16th, as supply permits.

Vaccination appointments at OPH clinics can be booked through the [COVID-19 vaccination portal](#), or by calling the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre at 1-833-943-3900. Vaccines will also be available through participating health care providers and [participating pharmacies](#).

COVID-19 vaccine recommendations and schedules

According to [provincial guidance](#) and [NACI](#), a dose of an XBB.1.5-containing COVID-19 mRNA vaccine is recommended for individuals 6 months of age and older who have been previously vaccinated against COVID-19, if it has been 6 months since their previous COVID-19 vaccination or known SARS-CoV-2 infection (whichever is later). Individuals who have not been previously vaccinated may use the XBB.1.5-containing COVID-19 vaccine to initiate the series.

High-risk criteria for vaccination with COVID XBB.1.5 products

The high-risk criteria for this Fall, as determined by the province, aligns the Ministry of Health's 2023-2024 Universal Influenza Program criteria and the Fall 2023 COVID-19 Vaccine Program criteria to promote co-administration whenever possible. The high-risk criteria are as follows:

- Residents and staff of congregate living settings (e.g. long-term care homes, retirement homes, other chronic care facilities,)
- People 65 years of age and older
- All pregnant individuals
- All children 6 months to 4 years of age [influenza risk]*
- Individuals who are from a First Nation, Inuit or Métis community, and/or who self-identify as First Nation, Inuit or Métis, and their household members
- Members of racialized and other equity deserving communities
- Individuals 6 months of age and older with underlying health conditions per NACI ([Influenza](#) & [COVID-19](#))

*Based on influenza risk and not on COVID-19 risk for this age group, however, co-administration is encouraged whenever possible.

Healthcare providers can begin vaccination of those at highest risk from COVID-19, along with health care workers and first responders as soon as vaccine is received. Vaccination of the general population is anticipated to start the week of October 30th.

Co-administration with other vaccines

Individuals 6 months and older may receive a COVID-19 vaccine simultaneously with (i.e., same day), or at any time before or after non-COVID-19 vaccines (including live and non-live vaccines) such as seasonal influenza (see below for exceptions). If vaccines are co-administered, immunization on separate limbs is recommended, however if the same limb must be used, the injection sites should be separated by at least 2.5 cm (1 inch).

There are two exceptions: COVID-19 vaccines should not be co-administered with the Imvamune vaccine (for mpox) and the Arexvy vaccine for Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). Refer to the current [Ministry of Health COVID-19 Guidance](#) for further information on co-administration.

The following table provides specific recommendations on the use of the Moderna XBB.1.5 mRNA COVID-19 vaccine product across age groups, as this will be the first available vaccine in Ottawa. Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty® XBB.1.5 mRNA COVID-19 vaccine was also recently approved by Health Canada. OPH is awaiting Ministry of Health guidance on the use of this vaccine and information on vaccine availability and will provide details when they become available.

Table: Specific recommendations on the use of the **Moderna XBB.1.5** mRNA COVID-19 vaccine product across age groups

Unvaccinated Individuals		
	Recommended Interval	Minimum Interval
6 months to 4 years	Moderna XBB.1.5 (25 mcg) • 2 dose schedule • 2nd dose 56 days after 1st dose	Moderna XBB.1.5 (25 mcg) • 2 dose schedule • 2nd dose 28 days after 1st dose
5 to 11 years	Moderna XBB.1.5 (25 mcg) – 1 dose schedule	
12 years and older	Moderna XBB.1.5 (50 mcg) – 1 dose schedule	
Previously Vaccinated Individuals		
	Recommended Interval	Minimum Interval
6 months to 11 years	Moderna XBB.1.5 (25 mcg) • 6 months (168 days) after last dose or confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection	Moderna XBB.1.5 (25 mcg) • 3 months (84 days) after last dose or confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection
12 years and older	Moderna XBB.1.5 (50 mcg) • 6 months (168 days) after last dose or confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection	Moderna XBB.1.5 (50 mcg) • 3 months (84 days) after last dose or confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection

The Ontario Ministry of Health considers individuals 6 months and older to be up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines if they have received a COVID-19 vaccine dose in Fall 2023. Bivalent COVID-19 vaccine products remain available. Individuals wishing to receive bivalent vaccines for the fall are recommended to speak with a healthcare provider. The bivalent vaccines do generate immune responses against the XBB.1.5 variant and variants that are descendants of XBB; however, the new XBB.1.5 vaccine formulation generates a stronger immune response to these more recent variants.