

Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine

Updated 2021-04-29

The [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine](#) is manufactured by Pfizer Canada ULC and BioNTech Manufacturing GmbH. Health Canada authorized this vaccine with conditions on December 9, 2020.

What are the ingredients in the Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine?

Medicinal ingredient: mRNA

Non-medicinal ingredients:

- ALC-0315 = ((4-hydroxybutyl)azanediyl)bis(hexane-6,1-diyl)bis(2-hexyldecanoate)
- ALC-0159 = 2-[(polyethylene glycol)-2000]-N,N-ditetradecylacetamide
- 1,2-Distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine
- cholesterol
- dibasic sodium phosphate dihydrate
- monobasic potassium phosphate
- potassium chloride
- sodium chloride
- sucrose
- water for injection

Do NOT take the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine if you are allergic to any of the ingredients in the vaccine, including polyethylene glycol (PEG).

PEG is a compound commonly found in laxatives, makeup, skin care products, personal lubricants, toothpastes, contact lens solution, cough syrup as well as an additive in some food and drinks.

Do NOT take the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine if you have had a severe reaction (anaphylaxis) after previous administration of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine.

Can I receive the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine if I am pregnant?

Pregnant individuals may choose to receive the vaccine at any time during their pregnancy. However, essential consideration should be made for those in the later stages of their pregnancy.

It is recommended, but not required, that pregnant individuals have discussion with their treating health care provider, or with a health care provider familiar with their pregnancy, that includes:

- a review of the potential risks and benefits of the vaccine,
- a review of the risk of acquiring a COVID-19 infection during pregnancy,
- a review of the potential risks /consequences associated with a COVID-19 infection during pregnancy, and
- an acknowledgment of the limited evidence from clinical trials of COVID-19 vaccines in the pregnant population.

Please see the [COVID-19 Vaccination Recommendations for Special Populations](#) for further details on COVID-19 vaccination for pregnant individuals.

Please Note:

- A letter from a health care provider is **not** required for vaccination.
- The extended dose interval of 16 weeks remains appropriate for this population.

Can I receive the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine if I am immunocompromised by disease or treatment?

- **Speak with your health care provider to receive informed counselling about COVID-19 vaccination.**
The counselling session should include a review of the risks and benefits of the vaccine, a review of the potential risks/consequences of a COVID-19 infection, a review of the risk of acquiring a COVID infection and an acknowledgment of the insufficiency of evidence for the use of current COVID-19 vaccines in these special populations.
- **When you go for your vaccination appointment, you will have to verbally confirm that you have received proper counselling from your health care provider, prior to vaccination.**

How many doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine will I need?

You will require 2 doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. The original interval between doses was 21 days, which has now been extended to allow more Canadians to access the vaccine and be protected. Most people can receive their second dose up to 4 months from their first dose. Individuals in remote and isolated First Nation communities and residents of long-term care homes, retirement homes, or assisted living facilities who are at greatest risk of exposure to COVID-19 and serious illness should receive their second dose between 21 and 42 days from their first dose.

With the extended interval, am I still protected?

The duration of protection from one or two doses of COVID-19 vaccines is currently unknown. Current evidence shows that the COVID-19 vaccines give a substantial protection within 2 to 3 weeks of vaccination. Experience with other multi-dose vaccines after a single dose suggests persistent protection could last for six months or longer in adults.

After vaccination, how long will it take for protection against COVID-19?

Based on studies in about 44,000 participants, the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine was 95% effective in preventing COVID-19 beginning 1 week after the second dose. This means that people may not be fully protected against COVID-19 until at least 7 days after the second dose.

How long does immunity from the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine last?

Like other COVID-19 vaccines, the length of immunity from the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine remains unknown. Currently, there is no evidence to suggest the need for booster doses of COVID-19 vaccine, after the two doses are complete. Research is ongoing.

How is the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine administered?

COVID-19 vaccines are given as an intramuscular (IM) injection into the deltoid muscle (upper arm).

What are the possible side effects?

The side effects are similar to what you might have with other vaccines and are generally mild to moderate. They included things like pain at the site of injection, body chills, feeling tired and feeling feverish. These are common side effects of vaccines and do not pose a risk to health. As with all vaccines, there's a chance that there will be a serious side effect, but these are rare. A serious side effect might be something like an allergic reaction. Speak with your

health professional about any serious allergies or other health conditions you may have before you receive this vaccine.

Is the vaccine safe?

Health Canada has conducted a rigorous scientific review of the available medical evidence to assess the safety of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. No major [safety concerns](#) have been identified. Find more information on the safety of the vaccine on the [Government of Ontario website](#).

What if I miss my second dose?

If you do not receive your second dose within the recommended timeframe, speak with your health care provider as soon as possible. Effectiveness after two doses is higher than with the first dose, therefore, it remains important to still receive the second dose of vaccine.

After Vaccination

Even after getting your second dose, continue to follow public health measures like wearing a mask, physical distancing and washing your hands often. The vaccine is an additional tool in our fight against COVID-19. It is unknown how long immunity from the vaccine will last. In addition, not everyone is able to get the vaccine for various reasons. We must continue to follow public health measures to slow the spread of COVID-19. Monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 and get tested if symptoms present. There is preliminary evidence that the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine may reduce asymptomatic infection, but the evidence is insufficient at this time to recommend stopping public health measures after vaccination.

Is Pfizer better than other COVID-19 vaccines?

All COVID-19 vaccines are good, and all vaccines will help fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

The authorization of additional vaccines in Canada to fight the pandemic can only help and provide additional support to respond to the pandemic as quickly as possible.

There are 4 vaccines approved for use in Canada and each report a different efficacy rate. The efficacy of different vaccines cannot be directly compared. Each vaccine was studied in a different clinical trial which were conducted at different times, using different populations and conditions. The authorized COVID-19 vaccines have not been compared in clinical trials.

Having additional vaccines authorized for use in Canada will provide the opportunity to better meet the vaccine dose volume needs so that more people can be vaccinated and protected against COVID-19 sooner.