

Questions and Answers:

Why do Albertans 75+ and FNMI 65+ need a third dose of vaccine?

- This is based on the recommendations made by the Alberta Advisory Committee on Immunization. Older Albertans, along with those who are immunocompromised or in seniors' supportive living, are receiving third doses because of their increased risk of hospitalization, death, or other severe outcomes.

Why are people being asked to wait six months after their second dose?

- There is limited data, however, six months is currently the optional interval for the additional dose based on what we know about waning immunity and longer term protection.

How many people are now eligible for their third dose?

- There are approximately 12,000 Albertans age 75 and older eligible to start getting third doses now, and about an additional 164,000 Albertans will be eligible mid to late October
- Approximately 17,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit people will also be eligible for a third dose by the end of October.

Will eligible individuals be able to book sooner than six months after their second dose? Or will the booking system not allow them to until they are officially six months past?

- Unfortunately the Alberta Vaccine Booking System will not have age or spacing rules built in, however, just because the system allows it does not mean that clients are eligible. If it is deemed you are not eligible due to age or inadequate spacing between vaccines at the time of your appointment, you will be asked to re-book when eligible.
- Prior to booking an appointment, please confirm your [eligibility](#).
- Eligible individuals can receive an additional dose:
 - Eight (8) weeks after a second dose, if required for eligible health conditions (i.e. Immunocompromised Albertans 12 and older).
 - Four (4) weeks after a previous dose, if required for international travel.
 - Six (6) months after a second dose if you are 75 years of age and older or First Nations, Metis and Inuit adults 65 years of age and older, no matter where they live.
- If it is deemed you are not eligible due to age or inadequate spacing between vaccines at the time of your appointment, you will be asked to re-book when eligible.

How will seniors know they're now eligible? Are you contacting them?

- We will be doing outreach through advertising, social media and online to inform seniors and other Albertans of eligibility.
- Pharmacists and physicians may also reach out to eligible patients when feasible to let them know about the vaccine and booking opportunities.

Are you using birth date or year of birth?

- We are using birth date. Albertans 75 years of age and older or First Nations, Metis and Inuit adults 65 years of age and older are eligible.
- Seniors will require ID as proof of age eligibility before the vaccine is administered.

Can family members book the appointment for their parent/loved one?

- Yes, family members can book the appointment on behalf of their loved one.
- Seniors will require ID as proof of age eligibility before the vaccine is administered.

Can community seniors with health issues arrange for a home visit?

- Individuals who received a home visit for first or second doses, will be eligible to receive a home visit for their third dose.

Why do First Nations, Métis and Inuit people have a different age range?

- This 10-year age difference is supported by evidence showing that First Nations and Métis peoples have significantly higher age-adjusted rates of COVID-19 hospitalizations, ICU admission and death.
- Based on Alberta-specific data, First Nations people have:
 - Triple the COVID-19 death rate of the rest of Alberta's population
 - More than three times higher rates of hospitalizations
 - Lower ages at diagnosis, admission and death compared to the rest of Alberta's population
 - Similar data is not available for Métis Albertans, but what is known points to this community having a comparable health status to First Nations.

Will third doses be available on-reserve?

- Yes. Individuals, aged 65 and older, who live on a First Nations reserve will be able to access third doses through local public health clinics on-reserve.
- Eligible Albertans age 75 and older can book appointments for third doses at participating pharmacies and physician clinics by using the booking system at alberta.ca/vaccine. Albertans can also call 811, [participating pharmacies](#) or [participating physician offices](#).

Are out-of-province individuals eligible for additional doses in Alberta if they qualify age-wise?

- Yes, out-of-province individuals who meet the age and vaccine spacing eligibility requirements can receive a third dose in Alberta.

When will third doses be available for the rest of Albertans?

- We continue to act on the best possible evidence. So far, third doses do not appear to be needed for younger Albertans.
- No province in Canada is currently offering third doses to the general population for those under the age of 65.
- At this time, the evidence does not support a need for third doses for the general population. Health officials will continue to monitor all emerging evidence on vaccine effectiveness across Canada and around the world.

How long after I get a third dose will I be fully protected?

- Peak efficacy against symptomatic COVID-19 disease is achieved about two weeks after the third dose.

What health risks does a third dose of vaccine have?

- The vaccines we have save lives. They are incredibly safe and the best way to protect your health.

- To date, there is limited data on the safety and efficacy of additional doses of COVID-19 vaccine, however trials that have been done on third doses do not show any significant increase in side effects after a third dose.
- Immunocompromised individuals should consult with their physicians before getting a third dose, in order to determine their personal risks and benefits of doing so, and the best time for them to get a third dose.

I had some side effects with the first two doses – will getting a third dose worsen those side effects?

- Studies show that individuals who received a third dose had side effects that were the same as with previous doses, and they were mostly mild or moderate and went away after a few days.
- Many do not experience any side effects from immunization at all.
- Minor side effects after vaccination are common, and can include:
 - pain at injection site
 - body chills
 - feeling tired
 - mild fever
- Any minor side effects should last just for a few days and then go away.
- If you have any concerns, call Health Link at 811 to report your symptoms or seek medical attention.

What health benefits does a third dose of vaccine have?

- Emerging experimental and observational data in adults suggest that an additional third mRNA COVID19 vaccine dose in immunocompromised people creates more antibodies and increases immunity levels than in those without a third dose.

Can eligible seniors get COVID-19 and influenza vaccines at the same time?

- COVID-19 vaccines may be administered with, or at any time before or after, non-COVID-19 vaccines. It is currently not known if more local reactions at the injection site is increased with co-administration. While no specific safety concerns have been identified, there is potential for increased reactions if COVID-19 vaccines are administered at the same time as other vaccines.

Does Alberta have enough doses to cover third doses for all eligible people in the province?

- Yes, Alberta does have enough mRNA vaccine to cover third doses. The National Operations Centre has more available as needed.

How do I get an appointment to get a third dose?

- Eligible Albertans age 75 and older can book appointments for third doses at participating pharmacies and physician clinics by using the booking system at alberta.ca/vaccine. Albertans can also call 811, [participating pharmacies](#) or [participating physician offices](#).
- Alberta Health Services will coordinate additional COVID-19 doses for residents of supportive living with other immunization partners as needed.
- Eligible residents of supportive living facilities will receive their third doses at their facilities.
- Eligible individuals, who live on a First Nations reserve will be able to access third doses through local public health clinics on-reserve.

Can I get a third dose at an AHS clinic?

- Eligible Albertans are asked to book their additional doses at a participating pharmacy or physician clinics rather than an AHS clinic, to avoid additional pressure on AHS resources.

What do I need to bring to a vaccination appointment?

- You need to bring one piece of ID with a birth date. If you have an appointment booked at an AHS clinic, you do not need an Alberta Health Care card.
- Those without a driver's licence can use other documents, including passports, health care cards or birth certificates.

Other eligible populations:

Why do immunocompromised individuals and residents of supportive living facilities need a third dose of vaccine?

- Alberta is making third vaccine doses available to those who need them most. Emerging research shows individuals with immune compromising conditions may make fewer antibodies, even after two doses of vaccine.
- Evidence also is beginning to indicate that protection against infection, especially against the Delta variant, may wane over time. Given this, an additional dose for residents of supportive living facilities, who are at high risk of severe outcomes and are also in the group first eligible for vaccines, would be beneficial.
- Immunocompromised and **residents of supportive living** facilities are more likely to get severely ill from COVID-19, and more likely to get breakthrough infections even after getting fully vaccinated.
- Emerging evidence shows that immunocompromised persons may not develop the same levels of immunity after vaccination as those who are non-immunocompromised.
 - the initial immune response following the usual two doses of vaccine is likely to be insufficient (e.g., in severely immunocompromised, CDC study shows 59% to 72% vaccine efficacy among immunocompromised people compared to 90% to 94% among non-immunocompromised people after 2nd dose)
 - the immune response to a primary vaccine series is likely to have waned over time (e.g. residents in long-term care)
 - a shorter interval between doses occurred as this can result in shorter immunity (e.g. spacing between 21 and 28 days between dose 1 and dose 2)

Which immunocompromised conditions qualify to get a third dose?

Immunocompromised conditions that qualify for an additional dose include:

- Transplant recipients, including solid organ transplants and hematopoietic stem cell transplants
- Those undergoing immunosuppressive treatments for autoimmune diseases (e.g., Rituximab)
- Individuals with chronic kidney disease who are receiving regular dialysis
- Individuals in active cancer treatment (chemotherapy, immunotherapy or targeted therapies) excluding those receiving only hormonal therapy, radiation therapy or surgery.
- Individuals with moderate to severe primary immunodeficiency (e.g., DiGeorge syndrome, Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome)
- Individuals with Stage 3 or advanced HIV and those with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome

- Individuals undergoing immunosuppressive therapies (e.g., anti-B cell therapies, high-dose systemic corticosteroids, etc.)
- Transplant recipients, including solid organ transplants and hematopoietic stem cell transplants

If asked for further specifics:

- solid organ transplant recipients — pre-transplant and post-transplant
- hematopoietic stem cell transplants recipients — pre-transplant and post-transplant while in immunosuppressed state (post-HSCT individuals are generally considered to be immunocompetent after 3 years as long as they are not on immunosuppressive drugs)
- individuals with malignant hematologic disorders and non-hematologic malignant solid tumors prior to receiving or receiving active treatment which includes chemotherapy, targeted therapies, and immunotherapy (does not include individuals receiving solely hormonal therapy, radiation therapy or a surgical intervention).
- individuals on anti-CD20 monoclonal antibodies (such as rituximab, ocrelizumab, and ofatumumab).
- individuals with chronic kidney disease on peritoneal dialysis or hemodialysis.

Do I have to provide proof that I have a qualifying condition?

- Alberta will operate on the honour system. A doctor’s note or other proof of an underlying condition will not be required. Albertans may want to consult their health care provider prior to booking their appointment if they need clarification on whether or not their condition is on the list, but this is not required.

I have another medical condition and am immunocompromised. Why can’t I get a third dose at this time?

- Studies show that there are specific immunocompromising conditions – such as those who are eligible for a third dose in Alberta — that would benefit from a third dose.
- We continue to monitor the evidence on whether or not third doses may be needed in other groups, and will adjust our approach as evidence warrants it.