



COVID-19 Immunization Plan and Frequently Asked Questions

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The Practice teams at the College of Physical Therapists of British Columbia (CPTBC) and the College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia (COTBC) recognize many registrants have questions about when they will be eligible for a COVID-19 vaccination, or how they can help with BC's [COVID-19 Immunization Plan](#).

We created this document to answer some of the questions we have received from registrants, as well as ones we anticipate you may still ask yourselves. The information offered has been informed by the BC Health Regulators (BCHR), of which CPTBC and COTBC are members. BCHR has been working with the BC Provincial Health Officer (PHO) and her team to help inform the rollout of the plan.

As new information and direction becomes available from the PHO about vaccine eligibility, or how health professionals can assist with the logistics of the plan, we will share it with you.

Background on the Phased COVID-19 Immunization Plan

- On January 22, 2021, the BC government provided a detailed update on the strategy for the province's evidence-based COVID-19 Immunization Plan.
- The plan is focused on protecting those most at risk of severe disease and death, and eventually stopping the spread of COVID-19 in our communities. This means that as long as there is limited supply of the vaccine, the province is prioritizing protecting those most at risk of severe illness and death.
- The government's plan is based on scientific evidence, as well as expert advice and recommendations from the [National Advisory Committee on Immunization](#), BC's Immunization Committee and BC's public health leadership committee.
- The evidence indicates that increasing age is by far the most significant factor impacting an individual's risk of severe illness and death. BC's phased approach to immunization reflects this:
 - Elderly populations will have the highest priority for vaccination.



- This age-based approach also increases protection for those with clinical risk factors for more severe COVID-19 illness, as the prevalence of these also increases with age.
- The government indicates the COVID-19 vaccine will be distributed equitably and ethically to people in BC, following [national ethical frameworks](#) and [BCCDC's COVID-19 Ethical Decision-Making Framework](#).
- **It is important to note that details are subject to change based on vaccine supply and emerging public health situations.**

Who is Included in Each Phase of the COVID-19 Immunization Plan?

Phases 1-2 (December 2020 to March 2021)

- Phases 1 and 2, which are focused on first protecting those most at risk of severe disease and death, include vaccination for **targeted** groups of health professionals.
- Phase 1 includes residents and staff of long-term care facilities and residents and staff of assisted living residences. There is provision for health professionals in private practice who are seeing residents in these settings to access vaccination through the relevant facility.
- Phase 2 includes all health care professionals providing **direct patient care in acute and community health care settings** (including home care). While the timing of individual professions is dependent on geography, vaccine supply and demand, all direct health care workers will be provided the opportunity during this timeframe, including occupational and physical therapists.
- The Colleges are relaying vaccination notices on behalf of the health authorities as requested, however have no additional information beyond what is contained in the notices. Occupational and physical therapists who have questions about how to access vaccination and/or their eligibility should contact their local health authority, per the instructions within the notices.

Phase 3 (April to June)

- Phase 3 includes vaccination of the “extremely clinically vulnerable” as well as the start of age-prioritized immunization of the general population ranging from age 79 to 60.



- BC's [COVID-19 Immunization Plan](#) notes ***once additional vaccines are approved and become available***, people between the ages of 18 and 64 who are “front-line essential workers or work in specific workplaces or industries may be included in the later part of Phase 3.” At this point, who is classified as an essential worker has not been detailed.

Phase 4 (July to September)

- Phase 4 focuses on mass vaccination of the general adult population. Recipients will be prioritized to receive their vaccinations in descending order from age 59 to 18.

Are There Roles for Occupational Therapists and Physical Therapists to Assist with the COVID-19 Immunization Plan?

- It is our understanding the provincial strategy for recruiting more vaccine providers from the health colleges is not yet in place.
- Details are still being determined around the approach to identifying and recruiting additional health professionals to support the province’s immunization plan. This will depend on vaccine supply and the number of vaccinations per week that need to be delivered, as there is reportedly already existing capacity.
- We anticipate that if extra capacity is required, health professionals who already have the delivery of injections in their scope of practice would be called upon first.
- BCHR and the regulatory colleges will be working with the PHO and the Ministry of Health to identify the experience/education that will be required for health professionals interested in becoming vaccine providers.

How Can I Stay Up to Date on Information Related to COVID-19 Vaccines in BC?

- We will send you updates as we know more. Registrants are reminded to monitor their respective College’s websites and social media for the latest COVID-19 updates and information.



- The [COVID-19 Immunization Plan \(updated January 22, 2021\) on the BC government website](#) provides detailed information about each phase of the plan, including details of when different age groups can expect to be vaccinated.
- The BCCDC website has a section that provides [information/resources for health professionals, including a question and answer document](#).

How Do I Respond if a Client Has Questions About the COVID-19 Vaccination?

- According to the Ministry's [COVID-19 Immunization Plan](#): *"The COVID-19 vaccine is saving lives. Vaccines do more than protect the people getting vaccinated, they also protect everyone around them. The more people in a community who are immunized and protected from COVID-19, the harder it is for COVID-19 to spread."*
- COTBC and CPTBC support the delivery of safe, evidence-based care. The Ministry reinforces that BC's [COVID-19 Immunization Plan](#) is based on scientific evidence, as well as expert advice and recommendations from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, BC's Immunization Committee and BC's public health leadership committee. Canada also has a [thorough and stringent system](#) to approve new vaccines for use in people.
- You have built a trusting therapeutic relationship with your client and as a result they may look to you for information about the COVID-19 vaccine. In keeping with this relationship, it is appropriate for you to provide clients with advice that is:
 - within your scope of practice
 - in line with provincial public health guidance
 - grounded in science and best practices
- In BC, the recommended source of COVID-19 vaccine information for your clients is the [BC Centre for Disease Control \(BCCDC\) website](#). [The Immunize BC website](#) also has FAQs for clients.
- If the client has medical questions or concerns about whether the COVID-19 immunization is appropriate for them given any personal medical history, their questions are best referred to their primary medical practitioner (e.g., refer on to the client's physician or nurse practitioner).



What if I Have Already Had the COVID-19 Vaccine?

- The good news is that immunization is an effective way to reduce you and your clients' risk of infection from COVID-19, and it complements all the other measures/precautions that we need to maintain at this time (e.g., washing your hands, not going out when sick, getting tested when indicated, keeping a safe distance from others, wearing a mask in public indoor spaces, and following the COVID-19 safety plans at your place of employment).
- Keep in mind that all COVID-19 safety protocols must remain in place to protect you and your clients during the rollout of BC's COVID-19 Immunization Plan until the PHO officially communicates it is safe to ease off or stop any of those measures.