

1. What is happening with the AstraZeneca vaccine in New Brunswick?

Health Canada is requiring AstraZeneca manufacturers to conduct a detailed assessment of the benefits and risks of the vaccine by age and gender in the Canadian context. In the interim, in an abundance of caution, New Brunswick will follow the recommendation from Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) to pause the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine for individuals under 55 years of age in Canada. This is due to rare instances of blood clots for people in this age group following AstraZeneca vaccination reported in Europe. To date, no such adverse events have been reported in Canada.

2. I've received the AstraZeneca vaccine. Should I be concerned?

Of 20 million doses given to date in Europe and the UK, there have been only 25 reports of this adverse event and none in Canada. This adverse event following vaccination is therefore very rare.

The risk of COVID-19 remains far higher than the risk of an adverse event after receiving a vaccine. COVID-19 has killed over 22,000 Canadians so far. About 1 in 100 Canadians who get COVID-19 end up needing intensive care and one in five Canadians who are hospitalized with COVID-19 develop blood clots.

3. What are normal side-effects of any vaccine including the AstraZeneca vaccine?

Minor and temporary adverse events, such as headache, fever, fatigue, or pain at the injection site, are common after all vaccinations.

4. What symptoms should I be concerned about?

Seek immediate medical attention if you develop symptoms such as shortness of breath, chest pain, swelling of arms or legs and/or persistent abdominal pain following vaccination.

Seek immediate medical attention if you develop severe or persistent worsening headaches or blurred vision within three weeks after vaccination, or you experience skin bruising or pinpoint round spots (other than at the site of vaccination).

5. Why continue to use the vaccine for people over 55?

In the rare circumstances where there have been serious side-effects reported in Europe, it has been in those under 55. The risk of developing serious illness and/or death from COVID-19 is far higher.

6. Will scheduled clinics using this vaccine still take place?

Planned clinics using the AstraZeneca vaccine have been postponed. Additional clinics will be scheduled and people will be contacted to book a new appointment.

7. Is the AstraZeneca vaccine safe and effective?

Health Canada reviewed the AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine, as well as a similar vaccine called COVISHIELD. They have stated that the benefits in protecting Canadians from COVID-19 continue to outweigh the risks and encourage Canadians to get immunized with any of the COVID-19 vaccines that are authorized in Canada when they are eligible.

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8. Can I get a different vaccine than AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD for my second dose?

Decisions on the type of second dose that will be offered to those who have been vaccinated with AstraZeneca vaccine will be determined based on the latest evidence and research. For now, you do not need a second dose for up to 16 weeks from your first dose.

