Alberta COVID-19 Pharmacy Immunization Program

Introduction

Since March 2020, Alberta Health has been working with the Alberta Pharmacists' Association (RxA) and other pharmacy stakeholders in developing and launching pharmacy based programs to support Albertans during the pandemic.

Pharmacy teams are accessible, community primary care providers and are in a position to leverage existing relationships to support the pandemic response. Alberta's community pharmacies are an important partner in the success of the COVID-19 Vaccine Response plan.

It is the purpose of the Alberta COVID-19 Pharmacy Immunization Program (ACPIP) to provide Albertans access to vaccine in a timely manner in the communities where they live.

Eligibility for Immunization

The Government of Alberta implemented a phased approach to target key populations in phases for the COVID-19 Immunization Program. To determine whom is included in each phase, recommendations from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) and the experts who sit on Alberta's Advisory Committee on Immunization are considered. Please visit https://www.alberta.ca/covid19-vaccine.aspx for more information about Alberta's COVID-19 immunization program and associated eligibility criteria.

ACPIP Requirements

This is a *voluntary* program for Alberta pharmacists working in community pharmacy locations.

This is a *voluntary* program for Albertans, however, immunization is ***strongly encouraged*** for all eligible Albertans.

The Alberta government has standardized practices for all immunization providers, regardless of whether a vaccine is provincially funded or privately purchased. As outlined in the *Immunization Regulation*, as of December 17, 2018:

- Health practitioners shall ensure that adverse events following immunization (AEFI) are reported to Alberta Health Services within 3 days of becoming aware.
- The Regulation also sets out requirements for the storage, handling and transportation of vaccines.

As of January 1, 2021, the *Immunization Regulation* requires health practitioners to ensure a report respecting immunizations and assessments is electronically submitted to Alberta Health within seven (7) days.

For the requirements of this program, Alberta Blue Cross billing claims for the ACPIP are required to be billed <u>on the day of service</u> provided by the pharmacy. This ensures complete, accurate and appropriate COVID-19 vaccination records for the Albertan which is critical to producing required documentation for employment, travel or other purposes.

Pharmacists have a professional responsibility to monitor Alberta Health COVID-19 updates and bulletins for changes to this program and/or the overall immunization strategy.

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Inbound Logistics

COVID-19 mRNA vaccines will be shipped to participants in a thawed or thawing state and must be refrigerated in a temperature monitored fridge <u>IMMEDIATELY</u> upon arrival without delay. Participants should make accommodations within their workflow/operations to ensure the receiving process for vaccine is done expediently to mitigate any risk of cold chain break.

More specific information on mRNA vaccine storage and handling requirements can be found below.

- [Alberta Vaccine Storage and Handling for COVID-19 Vaccine](#)

- Drug information on approved vaccines in Canada
  https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/covid19-industry/drugs-vaccines-treatments/authorization/list-drugs.html#wb-auto-4)

Client Booking for Immunization Appointments

In August 2021, the Government of Alberta introduced the Alberta Vaccine Booking System (AVBS), a centralized online appointment-booking platform designed to support Albertans booking their vaccine appointments at a community pharmacy or Alberta Health Services (AHS) clinic. Any eligible Albertan will be able to schedule an immunization appointment by using the AVBS.

Walk-in Immunization

In order to prevent vaccine wastage and to support pharmacy operations, COVID-19 vaccines may be administered to clients on a walk-in basis.

COVID-19 Vaccine Multi-dose Vials

Dependent on the type and size of needle and syringe used, it is possible to attain extra doses from the vial, however this is not consistent between all combinations of needle and syringe in the community setting. The number of doses should be maximized by program participants by using low-dead space (LDS) syringes and utilizing proper technique for withdrawing doses from each vial.

In order to be immunized by a pharmacist, the presenting client <u>MUST</u> be asymptomatic. This should be confirmed at the time of booking as well as immediately prior to each immunization appointment.

Screening for eligibility will be the responsibility of the pharmacist and will be guided by an assessment tool which can be found on the AHS website at;

https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Journey/COVID-19/Pages/COVID-Self-Assessment.aspx

Pharmacists must check the immunization module in NETCARE for previous administration of COVID-19 vaccine and type.

Pharmacists must check for the client history of previous testing in particular to determine if client has had a positive result in the last 14 days. If there is a positive test result in the last 14

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days, then the client should be referred to an AHS Health Link for further information by calling 811.

If a screening indicating the client is symptomatic or high-risk for previous exposure occurs in the pharmacy, then the pharmacy is to follow the hierarchy of controls, specifically with respect to environmental controls and cleaning.

Infection Prevention and Control

The Alberta College of Pharmacy has developed guidelines that contribute to a hierarchy of controls, for infection prevention. Please refer to this guidance for the most recent recommendations.

Immunization with COVID-19 Vaccine

The ACPIP Client Consent and Checklist will guide pharmacists to obtain informed consent for immunization with COVID-19 vaccine.

Prior to immunization, the pharmacist must ensure that all necessary supplies and ancillary items are readily available in order to avoid wastage of any doses.

Best practice include these mandatory requirements

- Client appropriate needle and syringe (LDS when required) to withdraw dose from vial and administer to client

- Alcohol swabs

- Sharps Container

- Hand sanitizer

- PPE

- Workspace Infection Prevention and Control materials

- Active surveillance information and QR code (see Reporting Requirements).

- Up to date emergency training, supplies, and polices to respond to an emergency event, especially for anaphylaxis.

Guidance from the manufacturer on preparing the vaccine, precautions and contraindications for administration can be found in the product monograph for each COVID-19 vaccine.

Once the vial of vaccine has been punctured, it is stable for short-term storage as per the product monographs. Pharmacists **MUST** be aware of these timelines as they are variable between different products.

ALL doses **MUST** be administered from a vial within this time, otherwise any remaining doses are spoiled and **CANNOT** be used.

DUE TO VACCINE SUPPLY LIMITATIONS, PARTICIPANTS MUST ENSURE THAT ANY POTENTIAL FOR WASTAGE OR SPOILED DOSES IS MITIGATED TO THE BEST OF THEIR ABILITIES.

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Reporting Requirements

Participants are required to, **every day**;

1. **Submit ALL claims for the vaccine that was administered using the date of service.**
2. **Submit ALL Adverse Events Following Immunization to Alberta Health Services**

Should an adverse event related to immunization be observed or reported to the pharmacist at any time post-immunization, it is paramount that these events be reported to the Alberta Health Services AEFI team through https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page16187.aspx or by calling 1-855-444-2324 (1-855-444-CDCI) if unable to complete the online form.

The pharmacist must be familiar with the adverse events that are reportable including the adverse events of special interest that is particular to the COVID-19 vaccine.

The Alberta Health Active Surveillance and Reporting of Adverse Events following COVID-19 Immunization Policy outlines the reportable AEFIs.

3. **Alberta Vaccine Inventory (AVI) Reporting Process**

Pharmacies will be required to access the AVI Portal to complete required reporting. Pharmacies that have not already done so are required to complete the enrolment for access to the AVI system as soon as possible by completing the form found at: https://vimsavi.alberta.ca/prod/login.jsp

You can enroll up to four on-site users per pharmacy site who will be responsible for submitting inventory records. ***Please complete all fields on all pages and hit the submit button.***

All locations holding any quantity of COVID-19 vaccine must complete a weekly physical count and reconciliation of their on-hand inventory by Monday at 9 pm. The on-hand quantities reported in AVI are used to manage inventory in the province and accuracy is essential to managing the COVID-19 vaccine program.

Training videos are available on the AVI home page (https://vimsavi.alberta.ca/prod/). For questions on the AVI process please contact the AVI Help Desk at 1-844-213-3600.

Patient Based National Survey

In addition, there is a client based national survey study to conduct active safety surveillance on the COVID-19 vaccines. The study is optional, and usually takes less than one minute to complete online. The study has received ethics and privacy approvals from all the appropriate groups.

The surveys were developed by CANVAS, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and the F/P/T Vaccine Vigilance Working Group (VVWG) and will be utilized by other participating provinces and territories. This information will be collected and provided to Alberta Health surveillance.

Enrollment should occur at the time of immunization with the attached QR code from the printable poster which can be scanned or by providing the link : https://canvas-covid.ca/

Additional Recommended Resources
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Information regarding the development of these vaccines and their safety can be found below.

Health Canada

- o [What you need to know about the COVID-19 vaccine for Canada](#)

- o [COVID-19: How vaccines are developed](#)

- o [Vaccine safety, concerns and possible side effects](#)

Alberta Health Resources:

- [Alberta's COVID-19 Immunization Policy](#)
- [Alberta Vaccine Storage and Handling for COVID-19 Vaccine;](#)
- [Active Surveillance and Reporting of Adverse Events following COVID-19 Immunization (AEFI) Policy;](#)
- [AVI-Web Login Page (alberta.ca)](#)

National resources:

- [The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) - Statements and Publications](#)
- [Planning guidance for immunization clinics for COVID-19 vaccines](#)

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