

XBB.1.5 COVID-19 Vaccine

Key messages

Albertans 6 months of age and older will be eligible for the updated COVID-19 vaccine (with the XBB.1.5 strain formulation) starting **October 16, 2023**. For most individuals, the XBB.1.5 COVID-19 vaccine can be given at least 3 months after the last dose and it is recommended to wait 3 months from a **positive** COVID-19 test. Pharmacies can immunize Albertans 5 years of age and older. The XBB .1.5 COVID-19 vaccine is expected to trigger a better immune response against currently circulating strains, compared to earlier formulations.

The Moderna SPIKEVAX XBB.1.5 vaccine is the only updated COVID-19 vaccine authorized for use in Canada at this time.

- The Pfizer-BioNTech XBB.1.5 COVID-19 vaccine has not yet been approved by Health Canada; approval is expected in the coming weeks.
- The Novavax XBB.1.5 COVID-19 vaccine has not yet been approved by Health Canada; approval is expected in the coming months. If approved, it will be the only non-mRNA COVID-19 vaccine available in Canada.

The administration of the COVID-19 vaccines is aligned to coincide with the Influenza Immunization Program, which supports co-administration of these vaccines where appropriate. Starting the week of **October 2**, as vaccine is received, pharmacists that are participating in the Alberta Outreach Immunization Program, can offer the XBB.1.5 COVID-19 and influenza vaccines to residents living in senior congregate care settings. The general public can begin to receive XBB.1.5 COVID-19 and influenza vaccines on **October 16, 2023**.

Clinical Updates For XBB.1.5 COVID-19 Vaccine

Vaccine dosage for Moderna SPIKEVAX XBB.1.5 vaccine

Please note the SPIKEVAX XBB.1.5 vaccine has one vaccine presentation for all age groups; however, there is a difference in dosage depending on age.

Age group	Dosage
5 to 11 years of age	0.25ml (25 mcg)
12 years of age and older	0.50ml (50 mcg)

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Vaccine administration schedule

Please review the updated biological page for the SPIKEVAX XBB.1.5 vaccine, found here under the Biological products and COVID-19 headings: <https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-immunization-policy> (the biological page is to be posted in the upcoming days).

Some important changes are below.

For Albertans aged 5 years and older **without immunocompromising conditions**, one dose of the XBB .1.5 COVID-19 vaccine can be given, regardless of vaccine history.

For Albertans aged 5 years of age and older **with immunocompromising conditions**, depending on past immunization history, **more than one dose** of the XBB .1.5 COVID-19 vaccine **may** be required. Please see the tables below for a summary of these recommendations. The list of immunocompromising conditions can be found in the SPIKEVAX XBB.1.5 vaccine biological policy page.

Immunocompetent			
Age group	Vaccine history	COVID XBB.1.5 dose(s)	Intervals*
5 years and older	Unimmunized	1	Dose given right away
	Previously received 1 or more doses	1	3 months from previous dose

Immunocompromised			
Age group	Vaccine history	COVID XBB.1.5 dose(s)	Intervals*
5 years and older	Unimmunized	3	Dose 1, right away Dose 2, at least 28 days after dose 1 Dose 3, at least 8 weeks after dose 2
	Previously received 1 dose	2	Dose 1, at least 28 days after last dose Dose 2, at least 8 weeks after dose 1
	Previously received 2 or more doses	1	3 months from previous dose

*If applicable, wait 3 months from last positive COVID-19 test.

Vaccine Storage and Handling

For updated storage and handling guidelines for the COVID-19 vaccine, please refer to Alberta Vaccine Storage and Handling for COVID-19 Vaccine (<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/alberta-vaccine-storage-and-handling-for-covid-19-vaccine>). **It is important to note**, the Moderna SPIKEVAX XBB.1.5 vaccine is stable at refrigerator temperatures (2 to 8°C) for only **30 days**. Closely monitor the date and time the vaccine was removed from frozen storage, especially for the initial vaccine distributed for the program start date. Please order vaccine judiciously in consideration for the 30-day expiration date.

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COVID-19 Vaccine PINS for billing through Alberta Blue Cross®

Manufacturer	Product	Descriptor	PIN
Moderna	SPIKEVAX XBB.1.5 5 doses/vial	Routine Recommended Immunization	08060050
		Other Risk	08060066
		LTC/DSL Resident	08060022

Alberta Vaccine Booking System (AVBS)

Pharmacy can begin to build schedules in AVBS for COVID-19 and influenza vaccines on **October 6**. Albertans can begin to book appointments in AVBS starting **October 10** for appointments starting **October 16** or later.

Starting **October 10**, community pharmacies that choose to utilize the AVBS for COVID-19 and/or Influenza vaccines will need to utilize the 'Available Vaccine Calendar' for creating appointment schedules as the 'General' scheduler will no longer be active. As of this date, vaccines managed under the scheduler with the 'Appointment Type' set to General should not be used to create appointment schedules. Please refer to the knowledge articles or user guides in AVBS for instructions on building schedules using the Available Vaccine Calendar which can be found under 'How to Manage Appointment Blocks Using Scheduler' and 'Overview of Scheduler'. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact eHSS.

Removal and wastage of Bivalent COVID-19 vaccine

- All Bivalent COVID-19 vaccine must be removed from cold chain storage for appropriate destruction by your pharmacy's standard of practice (Standard 5.13) **immediately** and no later than **October 2, 2023**. Only the XBB.1.5 COVID-19 vaccine will be used going forward.
- All bivalent COVID-19 vaccine must be accounted for and reconciled in Alberta's Vaccine Inventory Management System (AVI) using the following:
 - Category Code "Recall"
 - Reason Code "Recall"

This reason code will help Alberta Health track what vaccine was removed due to the bivalent program ending versus what vaccine was wasted due to vaccine expiry. Pharmacy wholesalers cannot accept vaccine returns. You are responsible for the proper destruction of unused/expired vaccine. The cost of destruction will not be reimbursed.

For assistance with benefit or claim inquiries, please contact an Alberta Blue Cross Pharmacy Services Provider Relations contact centre representative at

780-498-8370 (Edmonton and area)

403-294-4041 (Calgary and area)

1-800-361-9632 (toll free)

FAX 780-498-8406 (Edmonton and area)

FAX 1-877-305-9911 (toll free)

Alberta Blue Cross offers online access to current Pharmacy Benefacts and supplemental claiming information to assist with the submission of your direct bill drug claims.

Visit ab.bluecross.ca/providers/pharmacy-home.php

