

## COVID-19 Immunization Program Update and update on travel-related measles in Alberta

On October 27, 2023, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) published its **Updated guidance on the use of COVID-19 vaccines in individuals who have not previously been vaccinated against COVID-19.**

To align with the NACI guidance, as of December 4, 2023, the following changes were applied to the COVID-19 immunization program in Alberta and posted on the **Alberta Immunization Policy**:

### 1. COVID-19 vaccine schedule change for select individuals.

- Immunocompromised individuals 5 years of age and older with **no COVID-19 vaccine history** should receive **2 doses** of the XBB.1.5 vaccine (previous recommendation was 3 doses).
- Immunocompromised individuals 5 years of age and older who have received only 1 or 2 doses of non-XBB.1.5 COVID-19 vaccine should complete their 3-dose series with XBB.1.5 vaccine.
  - NOTE: Regardless of whether they have received 1 or 2 non-XBB.1.5 COVID-19 vaccine doses, the previous dose(s) should be counted and the series should not be restarted.
- For full details, please visit the **Alberta Immunization Policy** to read the **Moderna** and **Pfizer-BioNTech** biopages. A summary of the COVID-19 vaccine schedule is available [here](#).

### 2. Removal of the preferential recommendation.

- Previously, there was a preference for Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine over Moderna vaccine for individuals aged 12 to 29 receiving a series of doses due to increased incidence of myocarditis and/or pericarditis following the original Moderna Spikevax 100mcg monovalent vaccine series, especially after the second dose.
- **This preference is no longer recommended** as the XBB.1.5 vaccine is a 1-dose schedule for most Albertans.
  - The lower dosage of the available Moderna vaccine (50mcg in the XBB.1.5 formulation compared to 100mcg in the original monovalent formulation) is expected to reduce the risk of myocarditis and/or pericarditis.
- As part of informed consent, all vaccine recipients should be informed about the rare risk of myocarditis and/or pericarditis following COVID-19 immunization, regardless of the COVID-19 vaccine product. However, please couple this with information that the risk of myocarditis or pericarditis following COVID-19 infection is almost 7 times higher than following vaccination. Albertans should receive any mRNA vaccine that is available to them.

### Additional information regarding COVID-19 vaccine post-infection.

- Individuals who have had a COVID-19 infection still benefit from immunization. Immunity from both infection and vaccine (hybrid immunity) provides more protection than infection alone.
- It is recommended that the COVID-19 vaccine be delayed for those who have tested positive for COVID-19 (by PCR or rapid antigen test).
- For full details, please visit the Alberta Immunization Policy to read the Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech biopages. A summary of the COVID-19 vaccine schedule post-infection is available in Table 3 here.

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# PHARMACY BENEFACT

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## COVID-19 vaccine supply.

- In the upcoming months of the fall campaign (January 2024 to March 2024), Moderna XBB vaccine will continue to be available to order through your wholesale distributor.
- The supply of Pfizer Adult XBB vaccine is limited, and once the product is depleted from your wholesale distributor, additional doses won't be available to order.
- Due to the short expiry of these vaccines once they are thawed, we ask that all pharmacies order vaccine judiciously to prevent wastage.

## AVI compliance for December 2023 and January 2024.

Please note the following adjustments to the compliance reporting in lieu of the holiday season.

- December 2023 compliance:
- December AVI compliance will be monitored between December 4 to 20, 2023.
- The week of December 25 will be excluded from the AVI compliance reports to account for any pharmacy closures during the holiday season.
- The December AVI compliance reports will be emailed out to pharmacies between December 20 and 22. Provincially funded vaccine ordering suspensions that are already in place for December will still be in effect until December 31.
- January 2024 compliance:
- January compliance will be monitored between January 8 to 31, 2024. The week of January 1 will be excluded from the compliance reports to account for any pharmacy closures during the holiday season.

Thank you for your dedication and commitment to meeting the AVI compliance responsibilities and expectations in 2023. Further information regarding non-compliant events and suspensions can be found on the FAQ portion of the AVI Responsibilities & Expectations document found on the AVI login page: <https://vimsavi.alberta.ca/prod/login.jsp>.

## For awareness: travel-related measles in Alberta

- The Calgary Zone recently reported a travel-related measles case in an infant.
- Measles is highly contagious, and immunization is available free of charge for many Albertans. Individuals may present to a pharmacy to receive travel-related advice. **Please refer patients 6 months of age and older who are eligible for provincially funded measles vaccine to public health.**
  - **Children 12 months to 17 years of age** traveling to areas where measles is circulating in Canada or the U.S. OR to any country outside of Canada and the U.S. should have 2 doses of measles-containing vaccine with the appropriate minimum interval between doses dependent upon the measles-containing vaccine used.
  - **Children 6 months up to and including 11 months of age** should receive **1 dose** of measles-containing vaccine. They should then receive **2 additional doses** at 12 months of age or older with the appropriate interval between doses.

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](https://ab.bluecross.ca/providers/pharmacy-home.php)

