

COVID-19 immunization program update

Effective **April 15, 2024**, in accordance with the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) and the Alberta Advisory Committee on Immunization (AACI) recommendations for an additional dose of XBB.1.5 COVID-19 vaccine in the spring for individuals at higher risk of severe outcomes due to COVID-19 infection, the following changes will be applied to the COVID-19 immunization policy in **Alberta and posted on the Alberta Immunization Policy (on April 12)**:

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

- The following groups have been identified as being at an increased risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19, including hospitalization and death, and *are eligible to receive 1 additional dose of the XBB.1.5 vaccine if they have received the recommended doses on or after October 2, 2023*:
 - o Individuals 65 years of age and older;
 - o Individuals 6 months of age and older with certain immunocompromising conditions;
 - o First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals 6 months of age and older, no matter where they live; and
 - o Adults 18 years of age and older who reside in seniors congregate care living settings.
- The interval between additional dose of the XBB.1.5 vaccine and last dose for the eligible groups is at least 6 months.
 - o A shortened interval of at least 3 calendar months between the last XBB.1.5 dose and the additional dose will be permitted for residents of seniors' congregate care living settings to support implementation and operations in the most vulnerable population. A shortened interval is not permitted for the other eligible groups.
- For full details, please visit the Alberta Immunization Policy available at alberta.ca/alberta-immunization-policy#jumplinks-3 to read the **Moderna**, **Pfizer-BioNTech** and **Novavax** biological pages. A summary of the COVID-19 vaccine schedule is available here at <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/58d31634-61d9-469d-b95f-f714719b923e/resource/3d3b9948-b4d6-4f3e-bf56-bc49fcab4c00/download/hlth-aip-covid19-vaccine-schedule.pdf>.

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

- It is recommended that individuals who have had a COVID-19 infection receive the additional dose of the XBB.1.5 vaccine. However, for those who have recently tested positive for COVID-19 (by Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) or rapid antigen test), it is recommended to delay the additional dose for 3 months.

3. COVID-19 spring outreach program.

- Outreach Immunization Program services will be available to individuals living in seniors' congregate care living settings starting **April 15**. Planning is underway, and details will be communicated once finalized. Pharmacies that participated in the fall outreach program can expect to be contacted to participate again this spring.

4. COVID-19 vaccine supply.

- Moderna XBB.1.5 and Pfizer-BioNTech XBB.1.5 vaccines will be available to pharmacies through pharmacy wholesale distributors.

continued next page

continued from previous page

- Pharmacies participating in outreach should order their required quantity through their pharmacy wholesale distributor.
- Pharmacies are asked to order vaccine judiciously based on demand.
- Novavax XBB.1.5 vaccine will only be available through Alberta Health Services clinics. Appointments can be made by calling 811.

5. AVBS update.

- Please update your schedules and available appointments in the Alberta Vaccine Booking System (AVBS) to align with a start date of **April 15**.

Important links

- NACI statements: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/national-advisory-committee-on-immunization-naci.html>
- Alberta Immunization Policy: <https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-immunization-policy>
- COVID-19 vaccine schedule: <https://www.alberta.ca/covid19-vaccine>

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

