



Updated: January 2021

## VACCINE INFORMATION SHEET

# Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine

COVID-19 disease is caused by a new strain of coronavirus that is responsible for a worldwide pandemic. Most people only have mild symptoms, or no symptoms at all. But, others like seniors and adults with health problems can get very sick, require hospitalization, or die from the disease.

Vaccines make your immune system stronger and help build antibodies to prevent infectious diseases. It is much safer to get the vaccine than to get the disease.

### What is the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine?

The Moderna COVID-19 vaccine is a Messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccine. This new type of vaccine teaches your body to protect itself against COVID-19 without getting sick from the virus. The vaccine was approved by Health Canada on December 23, 2020.

### How do mRNA vaccines work?

mRNA vaccines are different from other vaccines because they don't contain any weakened or dead virus.

mRNA vaccines send messages to your cells to teach them how to make a harmless protein similar to the one found on the virus. Once this protein is made, it tells your immune system to make antibodies against COVID-19 as if you had the virus. These antibodies give your body a head start in fighting the infection if COVID-19 ever tries to enter your body.

After the antibodies are made, your body gets rid of the mRNA and protein naturally. There is no chance of the mRNA touching or changing your DNA. There is also no chance of getting COVID-19 from the vaccine because there is no virus inside it.

### How is the vaccine given?

The Moderna COVID-19 vaccine is given as **two** doses into the muscle, with at least 4 weeks between the first and second dose. It is not known how long the vaccine will last. Getting extra doses of the vaccine is not recommended right now.

### Who should get the vaccine?

The Moderna vaccine is approved for people 18 years of age and older. Your health care provider will make sure this vaccine is right for you before you get it.

### Who should NOT get the vaccine?

These people should not get the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine:

- People who have had an allergy to a previous dose of Moderna COVID-19 vaccine
- People who have had an allergy to part of the vaccine or its packaging

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### Who might be able to get the vaccine in the future?

Because the COVID-19 vaccine is still being studied, it is not yet approved for the following people:

- People who are immunosuppressed due to a disease or treatment
- People who have an autoimmune condition
- People who are pregnant or breastfeeding
- People who are younger than 18 years of age

If you fall into one of these categories, talk with your health care provider.

### What are possible side effects from the vaccine?

Vaccines, like all medications, can have side effects. Side effects to the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine are usually mild or moderate, and should last only a few days after vaccination. Side effects of the vaccine may be more common after the second dose.

Common side effects to the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine are:

- Headache
- Muscle or joint pain
- Chills
- Fever
- Pain, redness or swelling where the vaccine was given
- Swelling and tenderness in the arm pit
- Fatigue

To help with side effects, use a cool cloth over the sore arm and ask your health care provider if you can take medication like acetaminophen (Tylenol) for pain and fever.

### What should you do after getting the vaccine?

It's very important to stick around for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine in the very rare case you have a severe reaction. A severe reaction sometimes shows up as **hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips.**

If a reaction happens after you leave the site of vaccination – call 9-1-1 or your local community health centre, or go to the emergency department or local community health centre right away.

### Do you need to keep up with public health measures after getting vaccinated?

You are only immunized against COVID-19 after you have gotten two doses of the vaccine. Whether you are immunized or not, everyone should keep up with things like:

- Washing your hands often
- Keeping physical distance from others
- Wearing non-medical masks when physical distancing isn't possible
- Keeping your circle small
- Cleaning and disinfecting your home regularly
- Staying home when you're sick
- Getting tested when you have symptoms