

Memorandum

To: Administrators of COVID-19 Vaccine Policies

From: Dr. Robert Strang, Chief Medical Officer of Health

Date: August 31, 2021

Re: Nova Scotia COVID-19 definitions of fully vaccinated, optimal protection and contraindications

The authorized COVID-19 vaccines in Canada have been shown to be safe and effective against symptomatic COVID-19, and protect against severe disease, hospitalization, and death due to COVID-19.

The following is what is meant by “fully vaccinated” for the purposes COVID-19 vaccine policies that are based on differential actions/requirements depending on an individual’s COVID-19 vaccination status.

An individual is considered “fully vaccinated” against COVID-19 in the follow circumstances:

- 14 days or more after receipt of 2 doses of a 2-dose series of a Health Canada authorized COVID-19 vaccine (Moderna, Pfizer/BioNTech, AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD) following minimum vaccine dosing intervals; this is inclusive of mixed vaccine schedules.
- 14 days or more after receipt of one dose of a one-dose series of a Health Canada authorized COVID-19 vaccine (Janssen/Johnson & Johnson)
- 14 days or more after receipt of a complete series of a non-Health Canada World Health Organization (WHO) authorized COVID-19 vaccine (e.g., Sinopharm or Sinovac)

Notwithstanding the above, the Department of Health and Wellness (DHW) recognizes that the immunogenicity, efficacy and effectiveness of globally authorized COVID-19 vaccines vary and is committed to ensuring individuals remaining in Nova Scotia for an extended time are optimally protected from COVID-19 with highly effective COVID-19 vaccines. Optimal protection helps to protect both the individual and those they may interact with.

DHW encourages all individuals residing in Nova Scotia to become optimally protected against COVID-19. This means that people coming to Nova Scotia who have received a non-Health Canada authorized or Janssen/Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine and who will remain in Nova Scotia for two months or longer, may be eligible to receive an additional dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine even if they are “fully vaccinated” as per the policy definition above (additional information on optimizing protection against COVID-19 can be found in the [COVID-19 Vaccine Eligibility Policy for Individuals Residing in Nova Scotia with Non-Health Canada Authorized and/or Janssen COVID-19 Vaccines](#)). In the event of an exposure to a COVID-19 case, differential actions will be taken based on an individual’s vaccine status, therefore it would be prudent for any person residing in Nova Scotia

to ensure they are optimally protected against COVID-19 (i.e., receive a dose of a Health Canada authorized mRNA vaccine if they have been vaccinated with a non-Health Canada authorized vaccine, or a single dose of Janssen/Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine.

Vaccine policies need to provide accommodations for individuals who have a valid medical contraindication against receiving COVID-19 vaccine. These are limited in number, vaccine specific and include:

- a history of severe allergic reaction (e.g. anaphylaxis) after previous administration of a COVID-19 vaccine using a similar platform (mRNA or viral vector)
- an allergy to any component of the specific COVID-19 vaccine or its container [polyethylene glycol (PEG) for Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines; tromethamine (trometamol or Tris) for Moderna COVID-19 vaccine; polysorbate 80 for viral vector vaccines (AstraZeneca and Janssen/Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccines)]
- a history of major venous and/or arterial thrombosis with thrombocytopenia following vaccination with AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine
- a history of capillary leak syndrome (CLS) following vaccination with AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine

Additionally, as a precaution, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization recommends that people who experienced myocarditis and/or pericarditis after a first dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna) should wait to get their second dose of mRNA vaccine until more information is available.

Immunosuppression, auto-immune disorders, pregnancy and breastfeeding are not contraindications to COVID-19 immunization.

More details regarding contraindications can be found in the “contraindications and precautions” section of the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) statement on COVID-19 vaccines

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/national-advisory-committee-on-immunization-naci/recommendations-use-covid-19-vaccines.html>