

COVID-19 Vaccine After Care Sheet

What should I do right after I get the vaccine?

You should wait for 15 minutes after you get your vaccine to be sure you are feeling well. If there is a concern about an allergic reaction to the vaccine, you will be asked to wait for 30 minutes.

Symptoms of an allergic reaction include:

- Hives (bumps on the skin that are often very itchy)
- Swelling of the face, tongue or throat
- Trouble breathing

Staff will ask you to wait in the clinic area.

- Inform the clinic staff if you feel unwell while you wait.
- Keep your mask on and remain at least 2 metres (6 feet) away from others.
- Use the alcohol-based hand rub to clean your hands before leaving the clinic.
- Do not drive for at least 15 minutes after you get your vaccine or if you feel unwell.

What should I expect in the next few days?

Like other vaccines, the COVID-19 vaccine can cause side effects although not everyone will have these. Most side effects are minor. Side effects are more common, and you may notice them more, after the second dose of the vaccine. Side effects normally last for about 1-3 days.

Examples of common side effects of the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccine include:

- Pain, redness, and swelling at the injection site (where you got the needle in your arm)
- Tiredness
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Joint pain
- Chills
- Fever

Other side effects of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine may include diarrhea (loose, watery poo).

Other side effects of Moderna COVID-19 vaccine may include:

- Nausea (feeling sick to your stomach)
- Diarrhea (loose, watery poo)
- Enlarged lymph nodes (swollen glands) in your underarm

Use a cool damp cloth on your arm where you got the vaccine to help with soreness. Take pain or fever medication (such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen) to help with pain or fever, if needed.

It is rare to have serious side effects after getting the vaccine. However, if you have any of the signs or symptoms below, seek medical attention right away or call 911 if you feel very unwell.

Symptoms of a serious side effect include:

- Hives (bumps on the skin that are often very itchy)
- Swelling of the face or mouth
- Trouble breathing
- Very pale colour in skin and very, very drowsy (or sleepy)
- Very high fever (over 40°C)
- Convulsions (spasm or shaking) or seizures (fit of uncontrolled movements)
- Other serious symptoms (for example, numbness or feeling of “pins and needles”)

If you have any concerns about any reactions you have after getting the vaccine, contact your health care provider. You can also contact Public Health Ontario to ask questions or report an adverse (bad) reaction to the vaccine. For Public Health Ontario, call: 647 260 7100 or toll free at: 1 877 543 8931

When you report an adverse reaction you will be asked some questions about your health and the reaction you had. Reports of adverse reactions to the vaccine are sent to Public Health Ontario and to the Public Health Agency of Canada.

For patients getting chemotherapy

While a fever could be a side effect of the vaccine, it could also be related to your cancer treatment specially if your blood counts are low. Call your doctor or nurse right away if you have a fever, shortness of breath, or other signs of infection. A fever may be the first and only sign of infection. Even if you feel quite well, you can still get sick quickly. A fever is a temperature of over 38°C or 100.4°F.

If you are unable to reach anyone, go to the nearest emergency department. Be sure to tell the emergency department nurse and doctor that you are on chemotherapy.

Do NOT take medicines containing acetaminophen (for example, Tylenol, Nyquil, Sudafet, Vicks, Midol, Alka-Seltzer Plus, Dristan) until you speak with your doctor or nurse first. These medicines can “hide” your fever.

It is best to talk to your doctor or nurse **before** you get the vaccine about whether you can take medicines that contain acetaminophen. Based on your illness, blood counts and type of treatment, your medical team will tell you if it is safe to take these medicines for pain or fever.

For patients getting radiation therapy or have had radiation therapy

If you notice anything strange or odd in the area of your body where you got radiation treatment, contact your radiation oncologist.

Things to remember after you get the vaccine

Even after you get the vaccine, it takes time for your immune system to respond to the vaccine and offer protection. Continue to follow safety guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19:

- Wear a mask
- Stay at least 2 metres (6 feet) from others
- Limit or avoid contact with others outside your household

At this time, you will get your second shot of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine in about 16 weeks. However, it is possible the amount of time between shots may change depending on Ministry of Health guidelines.

You will get a printed record that shows you had your COVID-19 vaccine today. Keep the record and this information sheet in a safe place. Bring the COVID vaccine record with you for your second vaccine shot.

Appointment Date and Time for Second Shot:

Date: March 17, 2021

Guidelines from the Ministry of Health COVID-19 Vaccine After Care Sheet
Version 2.0 December 30, 2020 (amended January 6, 2021)

Created by: Cancer Education Program, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre