

NEWS RELEASE

Ontario Identifies Key Groups for Distribution of Initial COVID-19 Vaccines

Province Ready to Deliver Life-Saving Vaccines to Vulnerable Seniors, Health Workers

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[Office of the Premier](#)

TORONTO — The Ontario government is ready to distribute COVID-19 vaccines as soon as they are received, beginning with vaccinating vulnerable populations and those who care for them. As recommended by the COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force and in alignment with the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, the province has identified key populations to receive the vaccine first, including long-term care and retirement home residents and the staff who provide care to these groups. The government's approach is informed by science and prioritizes population groups that are at greatest risks of COVID-19.

Details were provided today by Premier Doug Ford, Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, Solicitor General Sylvia Jones and General Rick Hillier (retired), Chair of the COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force.

"We must deploy these first shipments of a safe and effective vaccine where they will make the most impact and save lives. That means vaccinating our vulnerable seniors and those who care for them as soon as possible," said Premier Ford. "We are working diligently with General Hillier and the task force to ensure anyone in Ontario who needs a vaccine will get one when we receive them from the federal government. Until then, we are asking people to look out for their elderly loved ones and protect themselves by continuing to follow the public health measures."

Groups receiving the early vaccine doses in the first few months of the Ontario immunization program will include:

- Residents, staff, essential caregivers, and other employees of congregate living settings (e.g., long-term care homes and retirement homes) that provide care for seniors as they are at higher risk of infection and serious illness from COVID-19;

- Health care workers, including hospital employees, other staff who work or study in hospitals, and other health care personnel;
- Adults in Indigenous communities, including remote communities where risk of transmission is high; and
- Adult recipients of chronic home health care.

"Ontario is ready to deliver COVID-19 vaccines to Ontarians as soon as they are available, and that starts with vaccinating our most vulnerable and those at greatest risk," said Minister Elliott. "Our priority continues to be the health and safety of all Ontarians, so we will make sure that no matter where they are receiving a vaccine, they will have a fast and safe immunization experience."

Ontario will also be prioritizing the rollout of the vaccine in regions with the highest rates of COVID-19 infection, including those in the Red-Control and Lockdown zones. The immunization program will focus on healthcare workers and the most vulnerable populations in those regions.

At first, COVID-19 vaccines are expected to only be available for non-pregnant adults over the age of 18 years old based on early clinical trials. As further information becomes available from clinical trials and from Health Canada approvals, the groups for which the vaccines are authorized for use could change.

Ontario's approach is based on evidence available, the guidance of the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, as well as recommendations from the COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force. Members, including ex-officio members, of the task force include experts in public health and immunization, health and clinical domains, ethics, behavioural science, operations and logistics, federal-provincial and Indigenous relations, and information technology and data.

As further information is made available about the various type of vaccines and availability of doses, additional details related to the implementation of the COVID-19 immunization program will be provided based on the latest medical advice and scientific evidence.

"Due to the limited supplies we expect to receive from the federal government, our initial distribution of vaccines will focus on Ontarians who are most vulnerable and at greatest risk," said Solicitor General Sylvia Jones. "Our government continues to take all measures necessary to stop the spread of COVID-19 while prioritizing the health and well-being of communities."

"That is why, based on the guidance of the National Advisory Committee on Immunization and the recommendations of our COVID-19 task force, the government will prioritize those living in long term care homes, retirement residences as well as our frontline health care workers who are so critical to our COVID-19 response," noted General Rick Hillier.

Vaccination is expected to be an effective way to prevent the spread and reduce the impact of COVID-19. Only vaccines that Health Canada determines to be safe and effective will be approved for use in the country. Before any vaccines are available in Ontario or Canada, they will undergo rigorous clinical trials to determine if they are safe and effective, and be evaluated and authorized for use by Health Canada using rigorous standards. Once a vaccine is approved and in use, Health Canada will continue to monitor it to ensure it continues to be safe and effective.

As the province prepares for the arrival of vaccines, it remains critically important that all Ontarians continue following public health advice to protect our communities and most vulnerable populations, and to stop the spread of COVID-19. This includes staying home if you have any symptoms, even mild; maintaining two metres of physical distancing from everyone else other than household members; avoiding social gatherings; adhering to the restrictions in your region on public and private gatherings; wearing a face covering indoors and wear one outdoors if physical distancing may not be maintained or if wearing one is required; washing your hands thoroughly and regularly.

Quick Facts

- The COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force is focusing on key areas such as distribution, logistics and administration, clinical guidance and surveillance, data, IT and reporting, and public education and outreach.
- The vaccines are being purchased and distributed to the provinces and territories by the federal government.
- Keeping Ontarians healthy and safe is the government's top priority. The vaccines that will be rolled out in Ontario will all be Health Canada approved.
- To help everyone stay safe, download the COVID Alert app. It is free to use and is available from the Apple and Google Play app stores. This app lets users know if they may have been exposed to the virus.

Additional Resources

- [Ontario Appoints Members of the Ministers' COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force](#)

- [Ontario Collaborates with Industry Experts to Plan the COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout](#)
- [Ontario Calls on Ottawa for Certainty as COVID-19 Vaccine Preparation Continues](#)
- [Ontario Appoints New Ministers' COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force](#)
- Visit Ontario's [website](#) to learn more about how the province continues to protect the people of Ontario from COVID-19.
- For public inquiries call ServiceOntario, INFOline at 1-866-532-3161 (Toll-free in Ontario only).

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