




- **Topic:** COVID-19 Vaccine Fact vs. Fiction and Q&A
- **Hosted by:** Dr. Sharon Straus, M.D., FRCPC, MSc (Physician-in-Chief, Geriatrician & Knowledge Translation Program Director, St. Michael's Hospital-Unity Health Toronto)
- **Guest Speakers:** Dr. Anju Anand, M.D., FRCPC (Physician, Respiriology & Sleep Medicine, St. Michael's Hospital-Unity Health Toronto; Founder of *This is Our Shot Canada*) & Dr. Samir Gupta, M.D., MSc (Physician, Respiriology, St. Michael's Hospital-Unity Health Toronto; *The Feed with Dr G* on YouTube)
- **Purpose:** this executive summary was created to provide a synopsis of the virtual Wellness Hub May 2022 Vaccine Town Hall<sup>1</sup>. The session was co-created by Dr Anand, Dr Gupta, and the Wellness Hub team.

To watch the full recording, please click [here](#) 

### COVID-19 Vaccine Fact vs. Fiction

An interactive session **sharing credible information & addressing myths** about the COVID-19 vaccines.

**Example:** 1. The vaccines don't work against the Omicron variant

 Fiction 



- The available **COVID-19 vaccines** do an **excellent job at protecting against severe disease outcomes** (such as hospitalization & death) from COVID-19 infection, with efficacy of **95-99%** based on clinical trial data done at the time of the original strain of the virus<sup>1, 2-6</sup>. This protection is slightly lower for the Omicron variant and newer sub variants, but is still enough to provide effective protection in the range of 80%<sup>1</sup>.
- **Vaccine effectiveness** against symptomatic infection has decreased further since the arrival of the Omicron variant (and decreases as time passes since the last vaccine dose), but it is **improved or restored with a booster dose**<sup>1</sup>. This is why It is recommended to get a booster shot to protect yourself against COVID-19 / Omicron<sup>1</sup>

For full **COVID-19 Vaccine Fact vs. Fiction** info sheet, please [click here](#):



### COVID-19 Vaccine Q & A

**Frequently asked questions (FAQ)** about the COVID-19 vaccines with **answers from our expert panelists**.

#### 1. Why is a fourth dose necessary, and who is eligible to receive it?

- A fourth dose (second booster) is recommended to top up protection against COVID-19 for those who are at increased risk, at an interval of 4-6 months since last dose<sup>1, 7</sup>.
- Eligible Ontarians for a 4<sup>th</sup> dose include<sup>7</sup>:
  - ✓ Adults who are aged 60+
  - ✓ Residents of long-term or congregate care/senior settings
  - ✓ First nations, Inuit and Metis individuals aged 18+
  - ✓ Non-indigenous household member aged 18+



To watch a video explanation of this question, please [click here](#).

**2. In Ontario LTC, the initial recommendation for fourth doses for residents was to get them 3 months after last dose. Are there any concerns for those who followed this guidance in terms of level of protection?**

- No. The initial recommendation for LTC residents to receive 4<sup>th</sup> doses at a 3-month interval was based on high rates of infection/ community spread at that time (which was the peak of the sixth wave in Ontario) <sup>1</sup>.
- At a population level, the risk of delaying additional protection from a 4th dose against the Omicron variant in high-risk populations did not outweigh the potential benefit of delaying that dose to get a longer lasting immune response<sup>1</sup>.

**3. Will I end up needing a COVID-19 vaccine annually like the flu shot?**

- It is unclear what the recommended vaccination schedule will be for COVID-19 in the future<sup>1</sup>.
- Scientists are still learning how many doses will be needed, and whether the vaccine will need to be adjusted for protection against variants of the virus<sup>1</sup>
- However, it is normal and expected for vaccine protection to decrease over time<sup>1</sup>, which is why boosters are required for other vaccines such as influenza, Hepatitis A and B, and Human papilloma virus (HPV), to name a few <sup>8</sup>.

**4. Is it safe to mix vaccines? Should I wait to get a certain type of vaccine?**

- It is safe to mix vaccines<sup>1</sup>.
- Studies have indicated that there is a marginal benefit/ advantage for those with certain vaccine mixtures over others <sup>1,9</sup>
- However, you should not postpone getting your next shot to get a specific vaccine, as

the risks from delaying protection from COVID-19 infection are high<sup>1</sup>

- The best vaccine to get is the first one offered to you<sup>1</sup>

**5. Should children (aged 5+) get the vaccine?**

- Yes. Health Canada has approved the following COVID-19 vaccines for children<sup>10-18</sup>.

**Aged 5-11:** 2 doses of Pfizer Bio-N-Tech or Moderna Spikevax, with preference for Pfizer if a choice is available to further minimize the rare risk of side effects following vaccination <sup>10, 12</sup>.

**Aged 12-17:** 2 doses + 1 booster of Pfizer Bio-N-Tech or Moderna Spikevax, with preference for Pfizer if a choice is available to further minimize the rare risk of side effects following vaccination <sup>10, 13</sup>.

- Although the risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19 is lower for children than what is seen in adults/ seniors, the number of Canadian children being impacted by COVID-19 is rising<sup>1</sup>. As of May 2022 approximately 6,000 Canadian children have required hospitalization, over 600 have required treatment in ICU, and there have been 37 child deaths from COVID-19 infections <sup>18</sup>
- Children are also at risk of developing Multi-systemic Inflammatory Syndrome (MIS), which is a syndrome linked to COVID-19 infection, which affects multiple organ and can cause serious illness<sup>19</sup>
- Getting COVID-19 impacts a child's ability to attend school and participate in social or recreational activities, which negatively affect mental health & well-being<sup>1</sup>
- For more information on child COVID-19 vaccines, please see the following:
  - Aged 5-11: <https://wellness-hub.ca/res/covid-19-vaccines-for-youth-ages-12-to-17/>

- Aged 12-17: <https://wellness-hub.ca/res/covid-19-vaccines-for-children/>
- To watch a video explanation of this question from Dr. Gupta & Dr. Anand, please [click here](#).

#### 6. Are there COVID-19 vaccines available for those who refuse or cannot take an mRNA vaccine?

- Yes. If someone aged 18+ is unable/unwilling to take an mRNA vaccine, there are other options available in Canada<sup>20</sup>.
- Nuvaxovid (Novavax Inc.), which contains SARS CoV-2 recombinant spike protein, is approved for use in those aged 18+<sup>21</sup>.
- Covifenz (Medicago), made up of a plant-based virus-like particles (VLP) of SARS-CoV-2 spike protein, is approved for those aged 18-64<sup>22</sup>.
- The Government of Ontario does have options available for those who wish to request a non-mRNA vaccine<sup>22</sup>, which can be found [here](#).

#### 7. What is Long COVID-19 and will the vaccine protect me against it?

- Long COVID-19 is diagnosed within 3 months of infection and symptoms include persistent fatigue, shortness of breath, and brain fog or cognitive dysfunction, which last for greater than 4 weeks<sup>23</sup>. This condition may result in significant time off work and family life disruption<sup>1</sup>. There is currently no known treatment for Long COVID-19<sup>23</sup>
- At least 10% of all unvaccinated people who get COVID-19 will develop Long COVID-19, according to estimates<sup>24</sup>
- Evidence from the UK, U.S.A, India, Indonesia and Israel has indicated that full vaccination against COVID-19 reduces risk of developing Long COVID-19<sup>24</sup>.

#### 8. Who is eligible for the COVID-19 treatment, Paxlovid?

- Paxlovid is an antiviral COVID-19 treatment approved to treat within 5-7 days of symptom-onset & prevent high-risk individuals from developing severe symptoms<sup>25,26</sup>
- Eligible Ontarians include those who are<sup>25-28</sup>:
  - ✓ Aged 18+ and immunocompromised
  - ✓ Aged 70+
  - ✓ Aged 60+ with less than 3 vaccine doses
  - ✓ Aged 18+ with less than 3 vaccine doses AND at least one of the following: obesity, diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, congestive heart failure, chronic respiratory disease, cerebral palsy, intellectual or developmental disability, Sickle Cell disease, moderate-severe kidney disease, moderate-severe lung disease
  - ✓ Pregnant & unvaccinated
- Other antiviral treatments include Remdesivir (available within 7 days of symptom-onset), and Evushield (for those aged 12+ who are immunocompromised & do not have an active infection)<sup>25, 26</sup>
- See the [screening tool](#) to see if you / a family member is eligible to receive antiviral treatment, or contact your healthcare provider.

#### 9. What is your advice to someone who is on the fence about getting the vaccine?

- It's important to have safe places where people can go to get accurate, reliable information about vaccines to make their own decision<sup>1</sup>
- We advise individuals to look to the people that they trust (E.g., community/ faith leaders, family doctor, etc.) to have conversations with in order to get vaccine concerns addressed.



## Closing Remarks from Our Panel:

- **Vaccines are safe and effective-** it is still important to get vaccinated against COVID-19 to help control the spread of the virus & protect yourself, your loved ones, and the community<sup>1</sup>
- **Stay Positive** – we have come so far and made a lot of incredible strides thanks to your continued hard work and dedication throughout the pandemic – thank you <sup>1</sup>

For more resources on COVID-19, please visit us at [www.wellness-hub.com](http://www.wellness-hub.com)

Email: [wellnesshub@unityhealth.to](mailto:wellnesshub@unityhealth.to)

YouTube: [KT Program](#)

Twitter: [@WellnessHubKT](#)



## Additional Resources:

### General Resources

- [Wellness Hub Vaccine+ Resource Repository](#)
- [The Feed with Dr G \(YouTube Channel\):](#)
- [This is Our Shot Canada \(website\)](#)
- [City of Toronto COVID-19 Vaccine Posters & Pamphlets:](#)
- [Interactive COVID-19 “Know it Or Not” quiz](#)
- [Toronto Voices “Covid-19 Stories feat. Dr Khenti” \(video series\)](#)
- [Dr Evan Adams explains COVID-19 and the vaccine \(video\)](#)

For Long-term Care:

- [CLRI Tools for Pandemic Challenges](#)
- [Ministry of Health and LTC Resources](#)

For Congregate Care/ Shelters:

- [Public Health Ontario COVID-19 Resources for Congregate Living Settings](#)

Provincial Vaccine Information Line

TTY 1-866-797-0007 OR 1-833-943-3900

### Community-Specific Resources

- [Canadian Muslim COVID-19 Task Force \(Website\)](#)
- [Toronto Jewish Community COVID-19 Task Force](#)
- [Assembly of First Nations COVID-19 National Task Force](#)
- [South Asian COVID Task Force](#)
- [Black Health Alliance COVID-19](#)
- [Health Care Access Research and Developmental Disability \(HCARDD\)](#)

### Child/ Adolescent Resources

- [Sick Kids COVID-19 Vaccine Consult Service \(by-appointment phone consult available in multiple languages\)](#)
- [Sick Kids CARD System \(website with videos, handouts, online game to prepare children for vaccination\)](#)
- [“Is it safe for youth to get the COVID-19 Vaccine” This is Our Shot Canada \(video\)](#)
- [Children’s Healthcare Canada COVID-19 Vaccine Questions \(video series\)](#)

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