

Answer Questions About Vaccinations During COVID-19

The start of flu season and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic will lead to questions from patients about vaccines.

Should I still get a flu shot if I'm social distancing? Yes.

Continue to emphasize the importance of an annual influenza vaccine for patients 6 months and older...using any age-appropriate vaccine.

Explain flu season can stretch until May and more than one outbreak can occur. Plus flu vaccination reduces risk of flu hospitalizations and death...as well as symptoms that may be confused with COVID-19.

Share how your pharmacy is limiting COVID-19 exposure (PPE, etc).

Defer vaccinations for patients with known or suspected COVID-19. Educate that this is to minimize contact with others...not due to any known harm in getting a flu vaccine if COVID-19 positive.

For example, wait until a patient with COVID-19 is isolated for at least 10 days...is fever-free...and symptoms have improved.

Should I avoid any vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic? No.

Reassure patients that vaccines, including flu vaccine, don't weaken the immune system or make people susceptible to other viruses.

And don't delay vaccines, even if side effects may mimic COVID-19 symptoms. Instead, educate about what to do if they occur.

For instance, advise staying home if patients develop fever...and contacting their prescriber if it doesn't resolve in a day or so.

Do any available vaccines help protect against COVID-19? Not yet.

Patients are hearing that some vaccines, such as MMR, might ramp up the immune system...or pneumococcal vaccines might prevent COVID-19.

But explain there's no proof yet that any available vaccine reduces risk or severity of COVID-19 infection.

Continue to follow provincial schedules for routine vaccinations.

What will a COVID-19 vaccine look like? Explain there may be new vaccine types. For example, some may use mRNA to spur the body to create proteins that trigger an immune response.

Expect most COVID-19 vaccines to require 2 IM doses of the same product a few weeks apart...and possibly need to be kept frozen.

See our chart, *Immunizations During COVID-19*, for more...including differences between flu and COVID-19 symptoms and contagiousness. Access our *COVID-19 Resource Hub* for a collection of key resources.

Key References:

-www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/national-advisory-committee-on-immunization-naci/guidance-influenza-vaccine-delivery-covid-19.html (9-24-20)

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-www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/interim-guidance-cases-contacts.html (9-24-20)

-MMWR Recomm Rep 2020;69(8):1-24

-www.immunize.org/askexperts/experts_covid19.asp (9-24-20)

-Hum Vaccin Immunother Published online Jun 5, 2020; doi:10.1080/21645515.2020.1773141

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