

**TO:** Physicians and Nurse Practitioners in Newfoundland and Labrador

**FROM:** Dr. Janice Fitzgerald, Chief Medical Officer of Health

**DATE:** March 16, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Information for physicians and nurse practitioners related to COVID-19 vaccine

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Dear Colleagues,

Thank you to all of you for the support and care you have provided to your patients over the past year. It has no doubt challenged us all and with the advent of vaccines we all can now see a light at the end of this tunnel. We are asking that individuals who have concerns regarding vaccines as it pertains to certain medical conditions, follow up with their health care provider to discuss more fully about the benefits and concerns of receiving the vaccine. We have outlined several groups of extremely clinically vulnerable persons. These are listed below and in our [Newfoundland and Labrador COVID-19 Immunization Plan](#). Below are links to some helpful resources that may assist you in answering questions that patients may have. Please keep an eye out for future CME events on this subject.

In the context of COVID-19 vaccination, people who are clinically extremely vulnerable include:

- Solid organ transplant recipients;
- People with specific cancers:
  - People with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy;
  - People with lung cancer who are undergoing radical radiotherapy or had lung surgery;
  - People with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment;
  - People having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer;
  - People having other targeted cancer treatments that can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors;
  - People who have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last six months or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs;
- People with severe respiratory conditions. Respiratory patients to prioritize include:
  - Any patient on chronic oxygen therapy (regardless of disease)
  - All patients (>16yrs) with Cystic Fibrosis
  - All patients with Interstitial Lung Disease (e.g. Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis, CTD-ILD, etc.)
  - All patients with Pulmonary Hypertension (PH) requiring PH-specific therapy

- Asthma or COPD patient with a severe exacerbation in the previous year (ER or admission)
- Any patient with severe lung disease based on PFT (FVC or FEV1 or TLC <50%)
- People with rare diseases that significantly increase the risk of infections (such as severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID), homozygous sickle cell disease);
- People on chronic immunosuppression therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection (biologic modifiers, steroid use  $\geq 20\text{mg/day}$  for  $\geq 14$  days, AZT, cyclophosphamide);
- People who have had their spleen removed;
- Adults with very significant developmental disabilities who cannot perform most activities of daily living (e.g. dressing, grooming, toileting, feeding, etc.);
- Adults on dialysis or stage 5 kidney disease;
- Women who are pregnant with significant heart disease, congenital or acquired; and
- People with significant neuromuscular conditions requiring respiratory support (e.g. MS, ALS, myasthenia gravis, spinal cord injury).

### **General information on COVID-19 Vaccine**

#### **Government of Newfoundland and Labrador**

General information on COVID-19 vaccine including priority groups and resources for health professionals:

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/vaccine/>

#### **Public Health Agency of Canada**

[COVID-19 for health professionals: Vaccines - Canada.ca](#)

[PHAC COVID-19 healthcare professionals vaccine toolkit](#)

[National Advisory Committee on Immunization \(NACI\): Statements and publications - Canada.ca](#)

- [COVID-19: Preliminary guidance on key populations for early immunization - Canada.ca](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccine: Guidance on the prioritization of initial doses - Canada.ca](#)
- [NACI rapid response: Extended dose intervals for COVID-19 vaccines to optimize early vaccine rollout and population protection in Canada - Canada.ca](#)

### **Resources for Special Populations**

#### **Allergy Considerations**

[Canadian Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology](#)

#### **Pregnancy and Breastfeeding**

[Government of NL resources on breastfeeding and COVID-19](#)

[CDC - USA: Recommendations for COVID vaccine and pregnancy](#)

[Vaccination Considerations for People who are Pregnant or Breastfeeding | CDC](#)

[Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists Statement on COVID-19 Vaccination in Pregnancy](#)

**Rheumatic Disease**

[Canadian Rheumatology Association Recommendation on Covid-19 Vaccination in Persons with Autoimmune Rheumatic Disease](#)

[PowerPoint Presentation \(rheum.ca\)](#)

**Persons with Underlying Conditions and other Vulnerable Populations**

[Key populations for early COVID-19 immunization: preliminary guidance for policy \(cmaj.ca\)](#)

[CDC - USA Clinical Considerations for Persons with Underlying Medical Considerations](#)

**Cancer**

[Ontario Health \(Cancer Care Ontario\) \(msh.on.ca\)](#)

[COVID-19 and Cancer - Information for Patients \(bccancer.bc.ca\)](#)