

MEMO

TO: Pharmacists and Physicians

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

DATE: September 15, 2021

SUBJECT: Guidance for Offering the Same COVID-19 Vaccine Product and Offering Additional Dose of COVID-19 Vaccine for Moderately to Severely Immunocompromised Individuals

Offering the Same COVID-19 Vaccine Product

The National Advisory Committee on Immunizations supports the interchangeability between COVID-19 vaccine products. However, at this time, some countries do not recognize travellers with mixed vaccine schedules as being fully vaccinated. In certain circumstances, a second dose of the same product or a third dose of COVID-19 vaccine may be offered to individuals:

- Who Must Travel for Employment Outside of Canada
- Who Must Travel for a Medical Procedure Outside of Canada
- Attending School Outside of Canada

Individuals who fit the categories listed above and have received a mixed vaccine schedule or only one dose of mRNA vaccine, are eligible for the same mRNA product for a second dose of COVID-19 vaccine or for a third dose of COVID-19 vaccine. These individuals must obtain a letter from their employer, physician or medical clinic or educational institution. The letter should contain information on the vaccine requirements and include the person's first and last name. The letter can be provided at time of vaccine appointment. These individuals can receive **one dose** of mRNA vaccine.

Individuals who are requesting an additional dose of COVID-19 vaccine for work, school, or medical procedure should be advised:

- If they have already received three doses of a COVID-19 vaccine product, no additional doses are recommended.
- There must be a minimum of 28 days between the second and third dose.

Offering Additional Dose of COVID-19 Vaccine for Moderately to Severely Immunocompromised Individuals

Evidence to date shows that some individuals who are moderately to severely immunocompromised, including those receiving immunosuppressive therapies, may have a lower immune response to COVID-19 vaccines compared to the general population. NACI identifies individuals that are moderately to severely immunocompromised as those with the following conditions:

- Active treatment for solid tumour or hematologic malignancies
- Receipt of solid-organ transplant and taking immunosuppressive therapy
- Receipt of chimeric antigen receptor (CAR)-T-cell therapy or hematopoietic stem cell transplant (within 2 years of transplantation or taking immunosuppression therapy)
- Moderate to severe primary immunodeficiency (e.g., DiGeorge syndrome, WiskottAldrich syndrome)
- Stage 3 or advanced untreated HIV infection and those with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
- Active treatment with the following categories of immunosuppressive therapies: anti-B cell therapies (monoclonal antibodies targeting CD19, CD20 and CD22), high-dose systemic corticosteroids (The Canadian Immunization Guide defines high dose steroids treatment as prednisone equivalent of ≥ 2 mg/kg/day or 20 mg/day if weight > 10 kg, for ≥ 14 days), alkylating agents, antimetabolites, or tumor-necrosis factor (TNF) inhibitors and other biologic agents that are significantly immunosuppressive

Individuals with these conditions can have an increased immune response after receiving an additional dose of an mRNA vaccine. Based on emerging evidence, NACI now recommends that individuals who are moderately or severely immunocompromised should receive:

- **three doses** of an authorized mRNA vaccine if they have not yet been immunized; or
- **an additional dose** of an authorized mRNA vaccine if they have previously received a one or two dose primary series, including those who received a mixed vaccine schedule.

For individuals who have already received a one dose or two dose primary series, the minimum interval between the last COVID-19 vaccine received and the additional dose is 28 days.

Even after an additional dose, individuals who are immunocompromised may still have reduced protection. Therefore, it is recommended that these individuals continue to follow recommended personal public health measures and that their close contacts, including household contacts and healthcare workers, receive a COVID-19 vaccine to help to protect the immunosuppressed person.

Individuals that are moderately to severely immunocompromised will be asked to self-identify and present to a vaccine clinic or their pharmacist or physician. Verification of the condition is not required. Health Care providers should continue to document immunization administration as per current policy.

For more information on offering the additional dose for immunocompromised individuals, visit:

[NACI Rapid Response: Additional Dose of COVID-19 Vaccine in Immunocompromised Individuals Following a 1- or 2-Dose Primary Series](#)

Approvals for third dose outside these guidelines should be referred to public health for consultation with the Regional Medical Officer of Health.