HealthLinkBC

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# COVID-19 protein subunit vaccine

Immunization has saved more lives in Canada in the last 50 years than any other health measure.

## What is the COVID-19 protein subunit vaccine?

The COVID-19 protein subunit vaccine (Nuvaxovid®) protects against infection from the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) that causes COVID-19. The vaccine is approved by Health Canada.

## Who should get the vaccine?

The protein subunit vaccine is approved for people 12 years of age and older. For more information, including how to request the vaccine, visit the Government of British Columbia website: www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/immunizations/covid-19-immunization.

## How is the vaccine given?

The vaccine is given by injection. People 12 years of age and older should get one dose. If you have a weakened immune system, you may need more than one dose depending on your immunization history.

It is important to keep a record of all immunizations received.

## What are the benefits of the vaccine?

Immunization is the best way to protect against COVID-19, which is a serious and sometimes fatal disease. The vaccine provides strong protection against severe COVID-19 illness, including hospitalization and death. When you get immunized, you help protect others as well, including those who are unable to get the vaccine.

## What are the possible reactions after the vaccine?

Vaccines are very safe. It is much safer to get the vaccine than to get COVID-19. Common reactions to the vaccine may include tenderness, soreness, redness and swelling where the vaccine was given. Other reactions may include tiredness, headache, fever, muscle or joint soreness, nausea and vomiting. These reactions are mild and generally last 1 to 2 days. Rare cases of inflammation of the heart (myocarditis and pericarditis) have been reported after getting the protein subunit vaccine.

> Acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (e.g. Advil®) can be taken for fever or soreness. ASA (e.g. Aspirin®) should not be given to anyone under 18 years of age due to the risk of Reye syndrome.

For information on Reye syndrome, visit HealthLinkBC File #84 Reye syndrome.

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine. There is an extremely rare possibility of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. This happens in less than 1 in a million people who get the vaccine. Symptoms may include hives, difficulty breathing or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. If this reaction occurs, your health care provider is prepared to treat it. Emergency treatment includes administration of epinephrine (adrenaline) and transfer by ambulance to the nearest emergency department. If symptoms develop after you leave the clinic, call **9-1-1** or your local emergency number.

Always report serious or unexpected reactions to your health care provider.

After getting the COVID-19 vaccine, you may be contacted to participate in a study monitoring the safety of the vaccine. To learn more about the CANVAS study, please visit https://canvas-network.ca.

## Who should not get the vaccine?

You should not get the vaccine if you have a serious allergy (anaphylaxis) to polysorbate 80 which is in the vaccine. It is also found in some medical preparations (e.g., vitamin oils, tablets and anticancer agents) and cosmetics.

Speak with your health care provider if you had anaphylaxis after a previous dose of a COVID-19 vaccine or if you have had anaphylaxis with an unknown cause.

There is no need to delay getting immunized because of a cold or other mild illness. If you have concerns, speak with your health care provider.

## Are there other considerations to getting the vaccine?

Speak with your health care provider if you:

- Were diagnosed with inflammation of the heart (myocarditis or pericarditis) by a physician after a previous dose of a COVID-19 vaccine without another cause being identified
- Have a history of multi-system inflammatory syndrome following COVID-19

## What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is an infection of the airways and lungs caused by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus. Symptoms of COVID-19 can include cough, shortness of breath, fever, chills, tiredness and loss of smell or taste. While some people with COVID-19 may have no symptoms or only mild symptoms, others can require hospitalization and may die. Serious illness is more common in older adults and those with very weak immune systems. For some people, symptoms of COVID-19 can last for weeks or longer. The long-term effects of COVID-19 on a person's health are unknown.

## How is COVID-19 spread?

The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads from person to person by coughing, sneezing, talking, singing and breathing. It can also be spread by touching an object or surface with the virus on it and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

## Mature minor consent

It is recommended that parents or guardians and their children discuss consent for immunization. Children under the age of 19, who are able to understand the benefits and possible reactions for each vaccine and the risk of not getting immunized, can legally consent to or refuse immunizations. For more information on mature minor consent, visit HealthLinkBC File #119 The Infants Act, mature minor consent and immunization.

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