



Renfrew County and District Health Unit

FACT SHEET

AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine

What is AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine used for?

AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine is a vaccine used to prevent COVID-19 disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine can be given to people 18 years of age and older. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recently recommends that AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine should not be used in adults under 55 years of age at this time while the safety signal of Vaccine-Induced Prothrombotic Immune Thrombocytopenia (VIPIT) following vaccination with AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine is investigated further.

How does AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine work?

AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine stimulates the body's natural defenses (immune system), by causing the body to produce its own protection (antibodies) against the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes the COVID-19 infection. You cannot get COVID-19 from this vaccine.

As with any vaccine, AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine may not fully protect all those who receive it. Even after you have had both doses of the vaccine, continue to follow the recommendations of local public health officials to prevent spread of COVID-19.

What are the ingredients in the AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine?

Medicinal ingredient:

- ChAdOx1-S [recombinant]

Non-medicinal ingredients:

- Disodium edetate dihydrate (EDTA)
- Ethanol
- L-Histidine
- L-Histidine hydrochloride monohydrate
- Magnesium chloride hexahydrate
- Polysorbate 80
- Sodium chloride
- Sucrose
- Water for injection

You should not receive AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine if:

- you are allergic to any of the ingredients in this vaccine,
- you had a severe allergic reaction after a previous dose of this vaccine,

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- you have any symptoms that could be due to COVID-19. Talk with your healthcare professional about your symptoms and getting a COVID-19 test. Your healthcare professional will advise you when you are able to receive the vaccine.

To help avoid side effects and ensure proper use, talk to your healthcare professional before you receive AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine. Talk about any health conditions or problems you may have, including if you:

- Have any allergies or previous problems following administration of AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine such as an allergic reaction or breathing problems;
- Have had a severe allergic reaction after any other vaccine injection;
- Have a weakened immune system due to a medical condition (immunodeficiency) or are on a medicine that affects your immune system (such as high-dose corticosteroids, immunosuppressants or cancer medicines);
- Currently have a severe infection with a high temperature (over 38°C);
- Have a problem with bleeding or bruising, or if you are taking a blood thinning medicine (anticoagulant);
- Are pregnant, think you may be pregnant or plan to become pregnant;
- Are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed.

How AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine is given:

Usual dose:

- AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine is given as an injection of 0.5 mL into a muscle of your upper arm.
- You will receive two injections, given 4 to 12 weeks apart. It is very important that you return for the second injection, or the vaccine may not work as well.

Extended Dose:

- NACI has recommended that the interval between the first and second dose be extended up to 4 months.
- This recommendation has been adopted in Ontario, with a limited number of exceptions.
- To make this decision NACI considered:
 - Review of recent scientific studies of efficacy and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines;
 - Real world effectiveness demonstrating a sustained high level of protection after the first dose of vaccine;
 - Immunological principles and vaccine science;

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- Modelling data from the Public Health Agency of Canada that examined different strategies to prevent the greatest numbers of symptomatic disease, hospitalizations and deaths;
- Vaccine supply projections.

Missed Dose:

- If you forget to go back to your healthcare professional at the scheduled time for your next dose, ask your healthcare professional for advice.

What are possible side effects from using AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine?

Like all vaccines, AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine can cause side effects. Side effects may occur at the following frequencies:

Very common (May affect more than 1 in 10 people):

- Pain, tenderness, warmth at the injection site
- Fatigue
- Chills (common after second dose)
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Nausea (common after second dose)
- Joint pain
- Fever (uncommon after second dose), Feverishness

Common (May affect 1 to less than 10 in 100 people):

- Localized redness, swelling, and itchy skin
- Localized hardening of soft tissue of the body (uncommon after second dose)
- Vomiting (uncommon after second dose)

Uncommon (May affect up to 1 in 100 people):

- enlarged lymph nodes

A cool damp cloth where the vaccine was given may help with soreness and, if needed, pain or fever medication (such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen) may help with pain or fever.

These are not all the possible side effects you may have when taking AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine. If you experience any side effects not listed here, tell your healthcare professional.

There is a remote chance that AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine could cause a severe allergic reaction. A severe allergic reaction would usually occur within a few minutes to one hour after

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getting a dose of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine. For this reason, your vaccination provider may ask you to stay at the place where you received your vaccine for monitoring after vaccination. Should you develop any serious symptoms or symptoms that could be an allergic reaction, seek medical attention right away. Symptoms of an allergic reaction include:

- hives (bumps on the skin that are very itchy)
- swelling of the face, tongue or throat
- difficulty breathing
- a fast heartbeat
- dizziness and weakness

If you experience a severe allergic reaction, call 9-1-1, or go to the nearest hospital.

Other Special Considerations for AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine

- Rare cases of serious blood clots have been recently reported in Europe following post-licensure use of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine. Cases identified so far have been primarily in women under the age of 55 years; although cases in men have also been reported and have mostly occurred between 4 and 16 days after receipt of vaccine. This adverse event is being referred to as Vaccine-Induced Prothrombotic Immune Thrombocytopenia (VIPIT). The exact mechanism by which the AstraZeneca vaccine triggers VIPIT is still under investigation.
- Anyone receiving the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine should be informed of this potential adverse event and advised to seek immediate medical attention if they develop symptoms of thromboembolism and/or thrombocytopenia between days 4 and 20 following receipt of the AstraZeneca vaccine.
- Symptoms to be vigilant for include:
 - shortness of breath;
 - chest pain;
 - leg swelling;
 - persistent abdominal pain;
 - neurological symptoms, including sudden onset of severe or persistent worsening headaches or blurred vision;
 - skin bruising (other than at the site of vaccination) or petechiae.
- In addition, healthcare professionals should be aware of VIPIT including how to diagnose and treat the condition.

If you want more information about AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine:

- talk to your healthcare professional,

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- find the full product monograph that is prepared for healthcare professionals at <https://covid-vaccine.canada.ca/info/pdf/astrazeneca-covid-19-vaccine-pm-en.pdf>, or
- visit our website at www.rcdhu.com.

Resources

- [Administration of AstraZeneca COVID-19 /COVISHIELD Vaccine](#) (Mar 11, 2021)
- [NACI rapid response: Recommended use of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine in younger adults](#) (Mar 29, 2021)
- [AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine Product Monograph](#) (Feb 26, 2021)
- [Vaccine Clinical Advisory Group \(VCAG\) Recommendations on Exceptions to Extended Dose Intervals for COVID-19 Vaccines](#) (Mar 26, 2021)

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