

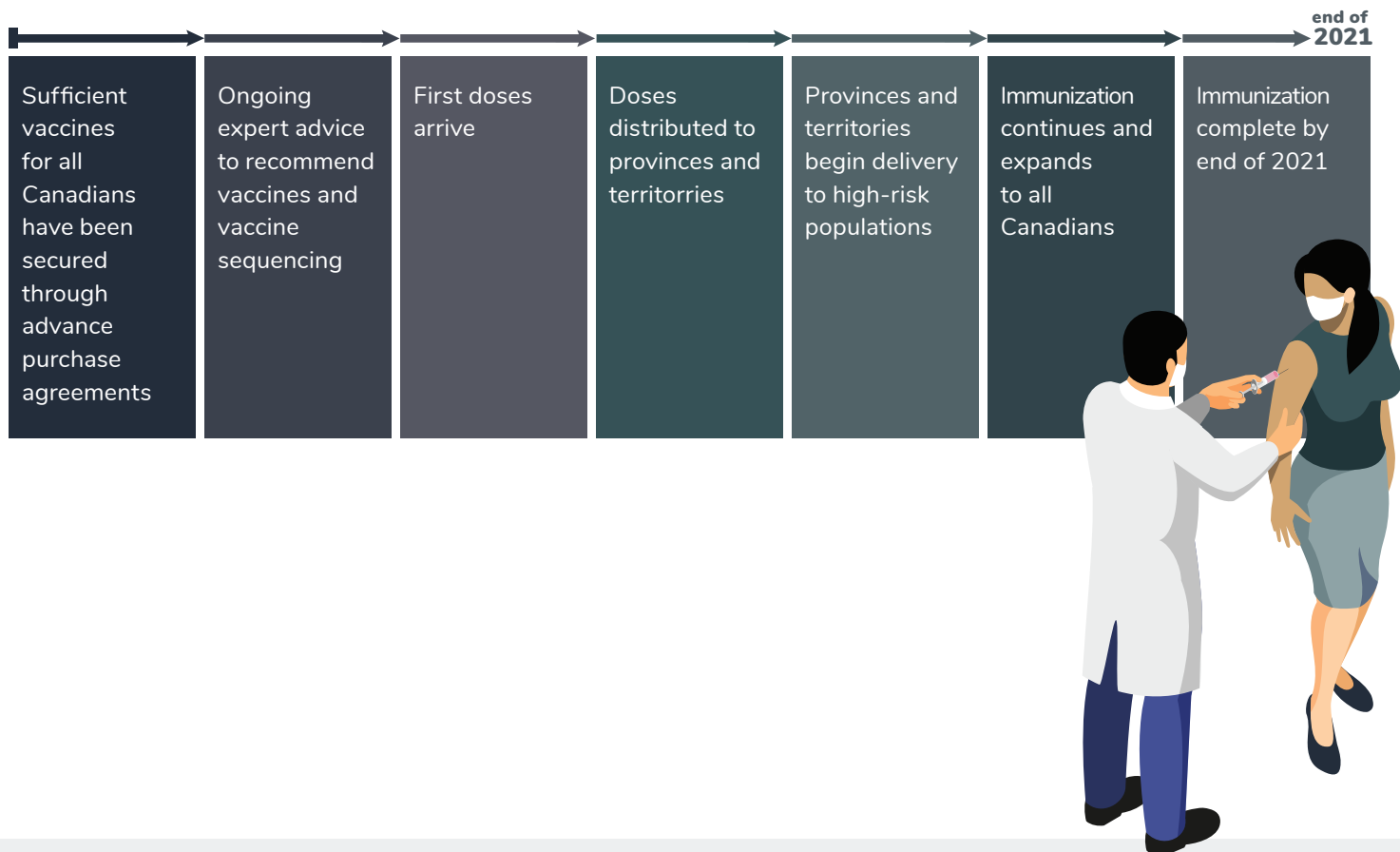
When a vaccine is ready, Canada will be ready

The COVID Immunization Plan

COVID-19 has presented unprecedented challenges that continue to impact the health, social and economic wellbeing of Canadians and the global community. By the end of November 2020, over 300,000 people in Canada had contracted COVID-19 and more than 11,000 of those lost their lives.

From the onset of this pandemic, Canadians have joined efforts and made sacrifices to keep each other safe, to help control the spread and to reduce the severe impacts of COVID-19. While these steps continue to be essential, **widespread immunization is the best option to protect people in Canada from COVID-19.** Over time, widespread immunization will let us lift many public health measures that are currently in place and will allow Canadians to start to live with fewer restrictions.

Canada's immunization programs and regulatory review systems are among the best in the world. The **COVID-19 Immunization Plan** maps out how Canada will provide Canadians with safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine(s).



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada

Canada

Canada's plan makes sure that when a vaccine is ready, Canada will be ready.

The goal of Canada's COVID-19 pandemic immunization response is to **enable as many Canadians as possible to be immunized as safely and quickly as possible against COVID-19, while ensuring that high-risk populations are prioritized.** The plan recognizes that while the pandemic affects us all, some groups have experienced disproportionate challenges.

Canada's plan: 7 Things Canadians need to know...

- 1 How Canada will make sure a vaccine is safe and effective:** The safety of a COVID-19 vaccine is a **top priority for Canada.** Canada has a high quality, rigorous vaccine regulatory system that reviews vaccines thoroughly for safety, efficacy and quality. **It is important to note that a vaccine is authorized for use by Health Canada only if it is proven safe and effective and its benefits clearly outweigh its risks.**

Under usual circumstances, it can take about ten months to review vaccine submissions. However, recognizing the urgent need for COVID-19 treatments, the Minister of Health signed an [**Interim Order Respecting the Importation, Sale and Advertising of Drugs for Use in Relation to COVID-19**](#). The Interim Order introduces more flexibility to speed up the review and authorization of drugs and vaccines for COVID-19 without compromising safety and quality. It allows Health Canada to accept rolling submissions for drugs and vaccines that have promising evidence and clinical trials underway. This means that Health Canada will receive and review the information when it becomes available from the manufacturer. While this new process will shorten overall review times, Health Canada still reviews all the data that is necessary to decide if a vaccine is safe and effective and of high manufacturing quality.

- 2 How vaccines are developed and purchased:** The development of a vaccine is a highly complex process that can take years. Because of advances in science and technology and the unprecedented level of global cooperation, a COVID-19 vaccine will be available much faster than was previously possible.

As of October 25, 2020, the Government of Canada has secured access for Canadians for seven leading vaccine candidates through agreements with Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna, Janssen/Johnson & Johnson, Novavax, Sanofi/GlaxoSmithKline, Medicago, and AstraZeneca. This represents enough doses to vaccinate all Canadians by fall 2021.

So far, Health Canada has received submissions for authorization of three (four) COVID-19 vaccines from AstraZeneca, Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna (and Janssen). The scientific reviews of these vaccines are being conducted in real time, as data becomes available.

- 3 Who is involved in Canada's immunization plan:** Canada's Immunization Plan requires close and ongoing collaboration between the federal, provinces and territories, First Nations, Inuit and Metis leaders, public health and logistical experts, manufacturers, and all Canadians.

Providing Canada-wide access to COVID-19 immunizations involves careful considerations of the different responsibilities and capacities across the country to prepare for shipping, handling, processing and delivery, and most importantly immunization.

Federal Government

Many federal departments are working together to buy, test, authorize and deliver COVID-19 vaccines. In addition, the Government of Canada is responsible for the delivery of health care to Indigenous populations living on reserve, members of the Canadian Armed Forces and populations incarcerated in federal correctional facilities. Federal departments are working together to make sure these people have timely access to the vaccine.

Provincial/Territorial Governments

Provincial and territorial governments have the responsibility of delivering health care to their population, including the deployment, prioritization and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. Working closely with federal departments, provinces and territories will:

- › receive and document vaccine shipments;
- › determine final prioritization and delivery plans;
- › plan and establish clinics for provision and delivery of immunizations, including providing the required training;
- › securely store vaccines at required conditions and temperatures;
- › manage and track redistribution of vaccine shipments within their jurisdiction's immunization delivery system; and,
- › work through the Immunization National Operations Centre (NOC) to order vaccines.

Indigenous Peoples

Engagement with Indigenous leaders and partners is vital to encourage high vaccine uptake in Indigenous communities. It is important to acknowledge the historical legacy of racism and trauma and support community-led approaches so that First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples can have access to a culturally safe immunization program. Federal, provincial and territorial governments are working together with respective Indigenous leaders to meet this challenge by informing their actions and decisions using a culturally safe approach that considers historical health care inequities.

- 4 When Canadians will have access to a safe and effective vaccine:** Canada will receive doses of two of the vaccines in early 2021 (Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna). The supply of these vaccines in January to March 2021 will cover 3 million Canadians with the supply arriving over the course of the winter. Canada will continue to draw on expert guidance from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) to advise on priority populations for immunization while vaccine supplies are limited and on further allocation as more vaccines become available.

On November 3, 2020, NACI released its **preliminary guidance** on key populations for early COVID-19 immunization, outlining a recommended targeted immunization program that achieves Canada's public health goals as efficiently, effectively and equitably as possible when vaccine supply is limited. Two main priority groups have been identified for the first vaccinations:

- › Health vulnerable: Those at high risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19
- › Exposure vulnerable: Those most likely to be exposed to the virus

NACI's recommendations will inform government decision-making around first vaccines once Canada has access to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines, and will continue to evolve and be refined as further data and information become available.

While the initial supply will be limited, at the beginning of 2021, Canada has secured supplies to enable all Canadians to be immunized against COVID-19 by fall 2021. Until that time, it is more important than ever for Canadians to continue to follow public health advice, to protect those most at risk and avoid the 3C's (closed spaces, crowded places, and close contact).

- 5 How Canadians will get a safe and effective vaccine:** The federal government is working closely with provincial and territorial governments and First Nations, Inuit and Metis partners to help them get ready to receive vaccines and vaccinate people. This includes making sure they have the necessary supplies and equipment as vaccines need to be managed safely and securely, while ensuring rapid and efficient delivery.

The Government of Canada is scaling up its logistics capacity and has established the National Operations Centre as a focal point for vaccine delivery and distribution to provinces and territories. It will also be awarding a contract for one or more Logistics Service Providers to safely manage and distribute COVID-19 vaccines across Canada.

The Public Health Agency of Canada is working with the Canadian Armed Forces, whose personnel have been integral to the Government of Canada's COVID-19 response since the onset of this pandemic. Notably, Major-General Dany Fortin joined the Public Health Agency of Canada to lead on the NOC and management of all vaccine delivery and implementation logistics.

In addition, the National Emergency Strategic Stockpile has acquired and started to share with the provinces and territories the necessary supplies such as millions of needles, syringes and alcohol swabs as well as ultra-cold freezers for vaccine storage.

It is important to note that each provincial and territorial government is responsible for deciding how to deploy COVID-19 vaccines within their jurisdiction (including vaccine prioritization), so the continued FPT collaboration that has characterized Canada's pandemic response to date, is integral for an effective immunization roll-out.

- 6 How Canada will continue to monitor vaccine safety and effectiveness:** Even before vaccines are rolled out in Canada, vaccine safety and effectiveness are carefully monitored based on reports from other countries. Once a vaccine is in use, Canada has a vaccine safety monitoring system called "post-market surveillance" that is an essential part of the Government of Canada's ongoing monitoring to ensure the continued quality, safety and effectiveness of all vaccines

and other health products that are in use in Canada. The system involves healthcare professionals, vaccine manufacturers, the provinces and territories, the Public Health Agency of Canada, and Health Canada, to alert public health authorities of changing trends or unusual adverse events that were not previously reported. Adverse events are to be expected, can be as mild as soreness/mild fever or be more serious in nature and they will not necessarily change the risk/benefit profile of the vaccine. If any new safety issues are confirmed, Health Canada will take appropriate action, which could include communicating the new risk to Canadians and healthcare providers or changing the recommended use of the product.

- 7 How Canadians will be engaged and informed throughout:** All levels of government will work together to provide Canadians with clear, consistent and relevant information so they can make informed choices about COVID-19 vaccination.

The Government of Canada will use different methods of reaching out to Canadians to engage with Canadians every step of the way. Currently the Canada.ca website has pages dedicated to [information on vaccines](#) and [vaccine authorization updates](#).

**When a vaccine is ready,
Canada will be ready.**