



# Southern Chiefs' Organization COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout Frequently Asked Questions

## 1. Why should I get a COVID-19 vaccine?

Vaccines make your immune system stronger. They build antibodies to help prevent diseases. Immunization is much safer than getting the potentially deadly COVID-19 virus.

Vaccines also provide protection for certain people who cannot get the vaccine, such as immunocompromised people and people with certain allergies. If the majority of people are vaccinated, that helps prevent the spread of the virus, which protects the health of the whole community.

## 2. Why are First Nation people a priority this time?

First Nation people are a priority at this time for a number of reasons including:

- First Nation people are particularly vulnerable to this deadly virus, largely due to colonial legacies which have led to lower health outcomes overall.
- While the overall test positivity rate is close to 10% for all Manitobans, that number jumps to nearly 17% for First Nation people.
- First Nations make up close to 60% of all active cases in the province and 40% of new cases.
- First Nations are over-represented in hospitalizations and ICU admissions due to COVID-19.
- Unlike the majority of cases in Manitoba, First Nations people are most likely to be infected through close contact to known cases of COVID-19

## 3. Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe?

Yes!

All vaccines are peer-reviewed and analyzed for their safety and effectiveness before they are granted approval by Health Canada. They have to go through a strict vetting process and must be shown to be safe and effective before they can be used. After approval, they continue to be monitored closely for their safety and effectiveness.

Two vaccines have been approved by Health Canada so far for use, Moderna and Pfizer. They were studied on 70,000 people and millions of people worldwide have already been vaccinated with more people are receiving the COVID-19 vaccine every day!

First Nation Health experts have advised us that this is the best tool we have to protect First Nation people from the coronavirus.

## 4. I am hesitant to get a COVID-19 vaccine, what should I do?

Some people are hesitant to get vaccinated against COVID-19 for a variety of reasons, including concerns and feelings of mistrust towards the Canadian medical establishment, inaccurate information shared about vaccines online and on social media, and the fact that the COVID-19 vaccines have been produced relatively quickly.

First Nation health experts encourage everyone to be vaccinated as our best defense against this deadly virus, which has had a disproportionate affect on First Nation people, communities, and livelihoods. If you're still hesitant after reading this FAQs guide then we highly recommend for you to contact your local health station or clinic where you can get trustworthy information on the vaccine, its distribution, and any other questions you may have.



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### **5. What is the difference between the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines?**

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines both offer excellent protection against COVID-19. Early results from clinical trials show that the Pfizer-BioNTech is 95% effective and the Moderna vaccine is 94% effective at preventing COVID-19 infections that produce symptoms.

These vaccines, which are given in two doses several weeks apart, give the immune system a preview of what the real virus looks like without causing the disease. This preview gives the immune system time to design powerful antibodies that can neutralize the virus and protect us from infection.

### **6. Why are First Nations receiving the Moderna vaccine, not the Pfizer vaccine?**

Both vaccines are shown to be highly effective, but the Moderna vaccine is easier to transport and was therefore selected for shipment to First Nations. The Pfizer vaccine requires special, ultra-cold freezers to be used for transportation and those freezers are in limited supply.

First Nation people who are eligible to be vaccinated according to the province's priority groups can choose to register for an appointment to receive the Pfizer vaccine at a provincial supersite in Winnipeg, or at Brandon or Thompson when they open. We encourage everyone who is eligible to receive a vaccine, either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, to be vaccinated!

### **7. When can I get vaccinated?**

Since all COVID-19 vaccines are new, supply is limited at this stage. In January, First Nations in Manitoba began to receive 5300 doses of the Moderna vaccine. The Province of Manitoba has also committed to an additional allocation of 5300 doses, which will roll-out the week of February 23, 2021.

At this time, all First Nations in Manitoba will receive a limited supply to vaccinate on-reserve priority groups, identified by the COVID-19 Manitoba Vaccine Task Force. According to the latest data, the number of new and total cases are higher off-reserve than on-reserve, but the number of active cases are more than double on-reserve than the number off-reserve. All First Nation people are important no matter where they live and SCO will continue to advocate that all First Nation people who want a vaccine should be vaccinated as soon as possible on a priority basis.

The priority groups are as follows:

- Essential health care workers providing services in remote and isolated communities who cannot access the provincial vaccination clinics and supersites.
- Residents and staff of personal care homes and elder care facilities (communal living).
- People over the age of 60 living in remote fly in communities.
- People over the age of 70 living in non-remote communities with road access.

### **8. I am not in the priority groups. When can I expect to get a COVID-19 vaccine?**

Vaccine supply will increase as more vaccines are delivered by Canada to Manitoba, and as additional vaccines are approved and distributed. As supply increases, the eligibility criteria for the COVID-19 vaccine will be broadened and updated on our website.

We currently do not have an accurate timeline for when people outside of the above priority groups will be vaccinated. We are working diligently to ensure that all First Nation people, both on and off reserve, will have the opportunity to be vaccinated as soon as possible.

We will continue to offer updates as more information becomes available.





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## 9. Who should NOT get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Several different groups of people are not able to receive the vaccine, including immune-comprised people, infants, and children under the age of 16 for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, and individuals under the age of 18 for the Moderna vaccine.

The COVID-19 vaccine should not be given to anyone who is allergic to the active substance or any ingredient in the vaccines, or if you have had a severe allergic reaction after the first dose.

Pregnant people and those who are breastfeeding should consult with their doctor or medical professional.

## 10. Are there side effects from COVID-19 vaccines?

While safe, there can be side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine, but they tend to be mild and go away in a few days, similar to a flu shot. It's also very normal and natural to experience some side effects as your immune system responds to the vaccine's healing components.

Responses may include:

- redness, swelling, or feeling sore where you had the needle
- feeling tired
- headache
- fever or chills
- body aches or sore joints
- feeling sick to your stomach (nausea), vomiting (throwing up), or loose stool (diarrhea)
- swollen lymph nodes

After you receive the vaccine, you will be monitored for at least 15 minutes in the unlikely event you experience an allergic reaction such as hives or swelling of the throat.

If you experience an adverse event or medical condition of concern after you leave the place of vaccination, contact your health station/clinic or call Health Links–Info Santé in Winnipeg at 204-788-8200, or toll free elsewhere in Manitoba at 1-888-315-9257.

## 11. Is there a cost to getting a COVID-19 vaccine?

No! All COVID-19 vaccines are free of cost.

## 12. Once I get the COVID-19 vaccine, can I stop wearing a mask and social distancing, and go back to 'normal' life?

Unfortunately, we are still far away from when we can return to 'normal' pre-COVID -19 life.

You should continue to:

- Follow all health orders until the majority of people are vaccinated
- Stay at home when sick
- Practice social distancing and wear a mask when in an indoor public space
- Wash/sanitize your hands frequently and avoid touching your face when out in public
- Limit social contacts as much as possible