



Health

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COVID-19 Vaccine: Booster Dose Guidance for Adolescents

Manitoba is adopting the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) guidance released on January 28, 2022, on the use of booster COVID-19 vaccine doses in adolescents aged 12 to 17 years.

Manitoba public health officials advise that effective February 7, 2022, a booster dose of COVID-19 vaccine may be offered ≥ 6 months after the last dose to adolescents aged 12 to 17 years who may be at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19, including those who:

- a. have a chronic health condition;
- b. are living in a congregate setting (e.g., shelters, group homes, quarters for migrant workers, correctional facilities); and/or
- c. belong to a racialized and/or marginalized community disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

A booster dose is not currently recommended for adolescents aged 12 to 17 years who are not at a higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19. Adolescents and/or their parents who wish to receive a booster despite not falling into one of the groups above will be advised to connect with their family physician or pediatrician to discuss the potential of receiving a booster dose.

NOTE: booster doses are authorized only for individuals aged ≥ 18 years in Canada. Use of booster doses in adolescents is off-label.

Manitoba public health officials continue to recommend Pfizer/Comirnaty™ (30 mcg) for adolescents because of a lower reported rate of myocarditis/pericarditis with Pfizer/Comirnaty™ compared to Moderna/Spikevax™.

There is no change to the booster dose recommendations for adolescents who are moderately to severely immunocompromised; they continue to be recommended to receive a total of four doses, as per the following timelines:

- at least eight weeks between dose 1 and dose 2
- at least 28 days between dose 2 and dose 3
- at least 6 months between dose 3 and dose 4

In making the decision to proceed with a booster dose, adolescent clients and/or their parent(s)/guardian(s) must acknowledge they understand the individual risks and benefits during the informed consent process as conveyed to them in the updated factsheet and/or in discussion with their immunizer. This includes an understanding of the following risks/benefits:

- **Risk of getting sick from COVID-19 and experiencing complications.** The need for and benefit of a booster dose in the general adolescent population is unclear. Although being highly transmissible, Omicron appears to be less severe (<1% of national cases among adolescents 12 to 19 years of age are hospitalized) than earlier variants of concern, and adolescents who have received two doses continue to be at very low risk for severe outcomes due to infection. However, based on past experience in this pandemic, some groups of people due to various biological and/or social factors, have been demonstrated to be at increased risk of serious illness. Young people also appear to be at lower risk of long-COVID, with two doses of vaccine further reducing that risk.
- **The limited and evolving evidence on the safety of a booster dose.** Preliminary post-market data shows no additional safety concerns beyond those reported after two doses. For dose one and dose two, adolescents are among the age groups at highest risk for the rare event of myocarditis/pericarditis following mRNA vaccination. Preliminary data suggests this rate may be similar, or higher, for booster doses as it is for the primary series among adolescents.
- **The limited and evolving evidence on the effectiveness of a booster dose.** Current evidence suggests a booster dose improves protection from mild and severe Omicron illness among adults. It is not yet known how long this increased protection lasts. There is currently limited evidence on the effectiveness of a booster dose against Omicron among adolescents. Finally, studies have shown that 2 doses provides high vaccine effectiveness at preventing the rare but serious complication of MIS-C. There is no data regarding the impact of a third dose on the risk of MIS-C.
- **What is known and unknown at this time** (e.g., it is unknown what future variants of concern may emerge, and how the vaccine will work against them).

Adolescent clients and/or their parent(s)/guardian(s) that consent to a booster dose are not required to provide documentation/proof of fitting into one or more of the groups who may be at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19 (i.e., due to a chronic health condition, living in a congregate setting, and/or belonging to a racialized and/or marginalized community).

Information for clients on the individual risks and benefits of a booster dose will be available in the updated **COVID-19 mRNA Vaccines Factsheet for Individuals Aged 12 Years and Older**, which will be posted on the website the week of February 7, 2022 at: www.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/covid/covid19_vaccine_factsheet.pdf.

More detailed information for health care providers will be available in the provincial **Clinical Practice Guidelines** that are being updated to reflect this new guidance and will be available the week of February 7, 2022, at: www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/vaccine/healthcare-professionals.html.

Please share this information with all relevant colleagues in your facility/clinic.

Sincerely,

“Original signed by”

Joss Reimer, MD FRCPC MPH
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