

October 14, 2021

To Our Valued Patients,

As most of you will have heard, the Ontario government recently announced that there are now new requirements for proof of vaccination against COVID-19 in certain settings. These are in effect as of September 22, 2021. Additionally, many employers, including the Peterborough Family Health Team, have instituted mandatory vaccination policies in the workplace. These changes mean that, we, your family doctors and primary care providers, have started to receive requests for proof of medical reasons to be excused from requiring a vaccination against COVID-19.

Please understand that, although there may be many reasons people may choose not to get vaccinated, as physicians we can only provide documentation with regards to established medical contraindications, in other words a reason that makes it inadvisable due to significant health risk. Currently there are only two circumstances that may warrant a medical exemption to immunization with an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine:

- 1) A proven and documented severe allergic reaction to a previously administered COVID vaccine or any of the ingredients contained within it. Please note that even when an allergy is present, the vaccine can often be safely administered in a controlled setting such as a specialized allergy clinic. As such, a medical exemption may require consultation with an allergist to confirm whether or not the vaccine can be given.
- 2) A medically confirmed diagnosis of pericarditis or myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle or the sac around the heart) - either of which are extremely rare following administration of a first dose of a COVID vaccine. In this case, it is currently recommended that further immunization be delayed until more data is available.

As a result, and in accordance with guidance from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, medical exemptions to vaccination for different reasons will not be provided. Peterborough Public Health is in agreement with this decision.

We understand that many of you still have concerns or questions about the COVID 19 vaccines that are currently available, or about symptoms you experienced after a first dose, and we continue to be happy to talk through your concerns or questions with you. We also know that there is a lot of misinformation circulating about these vaccines and it can be difficult to determine what information is true. Attached you will find an information sheet adapted by Peterborough Regional Health Centre which responds to some common myths about COVID-19 immunizations with the facts.

As your family doctors and primary care providers we are dedicated to using our knowledge and training to keep you and your families healthy. We know that vaccination against COVID-19 is not only key to keeping you protected from the potentially devastating effects of a COVID-19 infection, but a primary tool to avoiding further lockdowns, to keeping our children in school, and hopefully to being able to return to some sense of normalcy. You may book an appointment with your family physician if you would like to discuss your concerns about receiving a COVID-19 vaccine, but before doing so please first read the information which we have provided and endorse as accurate.

Sincerely,

The Peterborough Clinic

COVID-19 VACCINE

MYTHS AND FACTS

The arrival of the COVID-19 vaccines represents a momentous turning point in our fight against COVID-19; however, uncertainty and misinformation around the topic are prevalent. Below, we bust some of the most common myths about COVID-19 vaccination.

MYTH

The vaccines were rushed and we can't be sure they are safe.

FACT

The vaccines have gone through the same rigorous process as all Health Canada drugs/vaccines, only faster due to the severity of the pandemic. The vaccines have been tested in rigorous clinical trials and have been proven safe and effective. They have been approved by the Government of Canada for use in people 16+ who do not meet certain exclusion criteria.

MYTH

The vaccines can give me COVID-19 and make me sick.

FACT

None of the approved vaccines contain live virus, so cannot cause the illness that they are designed to prevent.

MYTH

The side effects of the vaccines are dangerous.

FACT

Serious side effects are extremely rare. Most people (approx. 90%) do not experience any side effects, and about 10% experience mild side effects (e.g. soreness at the site of injection) in the days following the shot. These side effects are expected and are not serious. They are more likely to occur after the second dose. Very rarely, allergic reactions can occur. This is true of any vaccine.

MYTH

Since some of the COVID-19 vaccines use mRNA technology, they can alter my DNA.

FACT

The pathway for RNA only works in one direction – you can make RNA from DNA, but you cannot make DNA from RNA. The RNA in this vaccine is a temporary messenger that tells your cells to recognize a “threat” and produce antibodies.

MYTH

If I've had COVID-19 before, I'm already immune and don't need to get vaccinated.

FACT

Even if you have recovered from COVID-19, there is still a chance of reinfection. You are encouraged to get immunized to optimize your immune protection.

MYTH

Getting the vaccine won't make a difference as I'll still need to follow all public health measures.

FACT

By getting the vaccine, you are helping to protect yourself, your loved ones and your community. Vaccines prevent illness and disease and save lives and livelihoods.

MYTH

After getting a COVID-19 vaccine, I will test positive for COVID-19 on a viral test.

FACT

None of the approved COVID-19 vaccines can cause you to test positive on viral tests. If your body develops an immune response – the goal of vaccination – there is a possibility you may test positive on some antibody tests. Antibody tests indicate you had a previous infection and that you may have some level of protection against the virus.

Mass vaccination will save people's lives and help Canada recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. As more individuals are immunized, public health measures will likely start to be discontinued.

For detailed information on the vaccine, please visit the Ministry of Health's website at <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccines-ontario>.

If you have concerns, we encourage you to speak to your doctor.