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# COVID-19 Vaccine | Janssen

## Information

The Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) COVID-19 vaccine has been proven effective in preventing COVID-19 infection, serious illness and death in adults from COVID-19 infection.

While the Janssen vaccine is currently authorized as a single-dose vaccine, it is important to note that an additional dose of mRNA vaccine is now recommended six months after a single dose of Janssen vaccine to provide better protection. In the future an individual may require two doses to be considered fully immunized.

The effectiveness of one dose of the Janssen vaccine at protecting against infection is 67 to 72 per cent (compared to the two dose mRNA vaccines that are 89 to 91 per cent effective at protecting against infection, and the AstraZeneca vaccine that is 89 per cent effective at protecting against infection after two doses). The lower effectiveness of the Janssen vaccine makes it a less favourable choice for Canadians.

If you would prefer to receive a viral vector vaccine, AstraZeneca is another option with higher effectiveness than Janssen and similar safety concerns. The AstraZeneca vaccine is a two-dose vaccine that uses the same viral vector technology as the Janssen vaccine to immunize recipients.

You may book an appointment by calling Health Link at 811.

### Who can get it?

Albertans age 18 years and older can access the Janssen vaccine if they have a contraindication to, or do not want, an mRNA vaccine. Please note a complete series with an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine is preferentially recommended for individuals without contraindications to the mRNA vaccine.

### Who shouldn't get it?

The Janssen vaccine is not currently authorized for individuals under 18.

### How effective is it?

The Janssen vaccine has been demonstrated to have a vaccine effectiveness of about 67% in preventing symptomatic infection 14 days after immunization, which is less effective than the mRNA vaccines and two doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine.

## Possible Side Effects

After receiving a vaccine, it is normal to have some minor side effects like pain at the injection site, fever, body chills or aches that go away on their own after a few days. As with all medication, there is also a small chance of more serious side effects like allergic reaction, so it is important to **monitor your side effects and seek immediate medical attention** if you experience any health concerns.

Like with the AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD vaccine, there have been very rare reactions reported after receiving the Janssen vaccine. If any of the following rare reactions are experienced, **immediately seek medical attention**:

### Thrombosis with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (TTS)

*Blood clots with low levels of blood platelets that develop between four and 28 days after being immunized.*

- Symptoms include severe headache that does not go away, seizure, difficulty moving part(s) of the body, new blurry vision that does not go away, difficulty speaking, shortness of breath, chest pain, severe abdominal pain, and/or new severe swelling, pain, or colour change of an arm or a leg.

### Venous Thromboembolism (VTE)

*Blood clots forming in the vein of a leg, arm or the groin (as examples).*

- Depending on where the blood clot forms, symptoms may include pain, tenderness, swelling, skin that feels warm to the touch and/or reddish discoloration or red streaks.

### Capillary leak syndrome (CLS)

*Fluid leakage from small blood vessels.*

- Symptoms include swelling of the arms and legs, sudden weight gain, low blood pressure, thickening of the blood, and low blood levels of albumin (a blood protein that helps carry various substances throughout your body, including

hormones, vitamins, and enzymes), and are often associated with feeling faint (due to low blood pressure).

- Individuals with a previous history of CLS should not receive either viral vector vaccine.

### Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS)

*Where the body's immune system damages nerves.*

- Symptoms such as pain, numbness and muscle weakness that may progress to paralysis, can start between three and 25 days after immunization.

### Immune Thrombocytopenia (ITP)

*Where the immune system mistakenly targets blood cells called platelets that are needed for normal blood clotting and can be associated with bleeding. Cases of ITP have been reported very rarely within the first four weeks after receiving Janssen COVID-19 vaccine.*

- Symptoms include easy or excessive bruising, superficial bleeding into the skin that appears as pin-point-sized reddish-purple spots that look like a rash (usually on the lower legs, bleeding from the gums or nose, blood in urine or stool, and/or unusually heavy menstrual flow.
- For people with an ITP history, platelet counts need to be monitored after immunization with the Janssen vaccine.

## What type of vaccine is the Janssen vaccine and how does it differ from the mRNA vaccines?

All four COVID-19 vaccines currently licensed in Canada help our bodies learn how to protect us against future infection from the virus that causes COVID-19, but they use different mechanisms to get the attention of the immune system.

Janssen is a [viral vector vaccine](#) which uses a modified harmless virus (vector) to carry the genetic code for the COVID-19 virus spike protein. Once in the cells, the vaccine provides instructions for the cell to make the spike protein, which then cause your immune system to produce antibodies that will protect you against COVID-19. The AstraZeneca vaccine and COVISHIELD are other examples of viral vector vaccines.

Moderna and Pfizer use mRNA technology to teach cells how to make a protein to trigger an immune response and make antibodies to fight the real virus. It does not alter your DNA.

## Can pregnant women get the Janssen COVID-19 vaccine?

The mRNA COVID-19 vaccines are preferentially recommended for pregnant individuals in the authorized age group without contraindications.

Janssen vaccine may be offered to individuals in the eligible group who are pregnant if a risk assessment with their primary health care provider or obstetrician determines that the benefits outweigh the potential risks for the pregnant individuals and fetus.