



**Saskatchewan
COVID-19 Immunization
Second Dose Strategy**

May 6, 2021

Executive Summary

Saskatchewan has deployed a very successful COVID-19 immunization program since December 2020, when COVID-19 vaccine was approved and allocated by Health Canada. At the beginning of the program, second doses were offered to patients in full alignment with the product label, as recommended by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI).

Since that time, further guidance from NACI on extending the interval between first and second doses has been provided. In mid-January 2021, NACI recommended the interval extend to six weeks. In early March, NACI further revised their statement, extending the interval up to four months for all COVID-19 vaccine products, in the context of limited vaccine supply. NACI further endorsed this statement in early April, providing additional evidence and support for vaccinating as many Canadians as quickly as possible with a first dose.

Beginning on March 5, Saskatchewan's delivery plan pivoted to administering first doses only, with second doses administered at an interval of up to four months. This delayed second dose strategy did not apply to long-term care and personal care residents and staff, or to any existing second dose appointments. The province continues to provide second doses to long-term care and personal care home residents and staff, as per the January 2021 NACI-recommended interval of six weeks. All Saskatchewan residents who received their first dose will be eligible to receive their second dose when the supply is available and the priority sequencing for first doses is complete – within the four month interval.

Current vaccine allocation projections indicate Saskatchewan residents aged 18 years (Moderna)/16 years (Pfizer) and up could be vaccinated with their first dose by late May or early June. Second-dose administration will overlap with the completion of first doses during this time period. With Health Canada's approval of Pfizer for residents 12 years and up on May 5, this age cohort will be added to the vaccination roll-out strategy for first and second doses.

The COVID-19 Immunization Delivery Plan evolves involves a number of health system providers administering vaccines. This includes pharmacies, physicians, Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA), Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority (NITHA) and First Nations communities.

Accessibility

A cornerstone of Saskatchewan's COVID-19 immunization program is accessibility. Residents will be able to access COVID-19 vaccine through a variety of methods, including booked appointments, mobile clinics, and non-appointment drive-thru and walk-in clinics. Pharmacies, physician offices and on-reserve service delivery, through Indigenous Services Canada and NITHA, are also part of Saskatchewan's plan to continue to offer second doses to residents as close to home as possible.

Following NACI and Health Canada guidance on second doses, Saskatchewan will vaccinate residents with the same COVID-19 vaccine product that was administered for the first dose. Should NACI and/or Health Canada guidance on this change, the province, upon recommendation from the provincial Clinical Expert Advisory Committee and by decision of the COVID-19 Immunization Planning Oversight Committee, may make adjustments to the second dose product.

In addition to the type of clinic someone can attend, Saskatchewan residents will also have the option of where to receive their vaccination. Although it cannot be guaranteed that all COVID-19 vaccine products will be available at every clinic, vaccine will be available in home communities as much as possible. In alignment with first dose administration, there will continue to be no boundaries on where residents can be vaccinated with their second dose.

As always, Saskatchewan will continue to collaborate closely with Indigenous partners to allocate and administer vaccines to First Nations and Métis communities. With an agreement in place between the Ministry of Health and ISC, COVID-19 vaccine is allocated to ISC directly, who then further distributes COVID-19 vaccine to on-reserve populations, in alignment with the province's priority sequencing. ISC allocates vaccine to NITHA for on-reserve vaccinations as well. Urban Indigenous and Métis populations continue to be vaccinated by the SHA and could also be vaccinated through a participating pharmacy. SHA has collaborated with some tribal councils in the province, supporting the operations of urban Indigenous clinics – this delivery model is expected to continue with second dose administration as well.

ISC and NITHA will manage the allocation and communication of second doses with on-reserve FN communities directly.

Sequencing and Priority Populations

In Phase One and Two of Saskatchewan's Immunization Delivery Plan, Saskatchewan prioritized vaccination to those most vulnerable, including residents and staff of long-term care and personal care homes, as well as those in group homes and shelters, healthcare workers, clinically extremely vulnerable patients and residents from oldest to youngest.

To ensure all residents are fully vaccinated with two doses of vaccine within the maximum interval of four months, second doses will be offered in the same sequencing order as the first doses with priority for second doses given to eligible individuals with designated medical conditions.

To provide a buffer for the maximum interval and mitigate against residents not receiving a timely dose, booking of second doses will begin as early as 13 weeks after the first dose was administered. As COVID-19 vaccine supply increases, the interval between second doses will decrease with a goal of meeting the manufacturers' second-dose interval recommendation. While vaccine supply is limited, eligibility for second doses will be in weekly intervals from the time that the first dose was administered. For example, individuals who received a first dose from March 1 to March 8 would be eligible to book a second appointment.

The Clinical Expert Advisory Committee may provide further recommendations on the timing of second doses for priority groups. These recommendations should align with national guidelines and support local epidemiology. Decisions on adjusting second dose intervals will be made by the Oversight Committee and the Government of Saskatchewan.

Validating Eligibility

Using existing IT systems, health system partners have the tools and technology to ensure Saskatchewan residents are receiving the correct COVID-19 vaccine for their second dose. These systems will also be able to identify the date of an individual's first dose, further ensuring alignment with the interval. Health system partners must ensure that validation of a resident's first dose, including the vaccine product, is completed before vaccine is administered. The IT systems that can provide this information include Panorama, COVID Quick Entry and eHR Viewer.

Residents who received their first dose in a different jurisdiction will be eligible to receive their second dose in Saskatchewan and in alignment with the province's current interval. Individuals in this scenario will need to have documentation of their first dose from the jurisdiction they received it in.

Avoiding Wastage

Similar to the work standards applied with first-dose administration, the following standards are in place for all health system partners. These standards, applied in the order in which they are shown, ensure all available COVID-19 vaccines are administered by the end of the day to avoid vaccine wastage at all costs.

1. Teams should first ensure the [COVID-19 vaccine transportation work standards](#) are followed to determine whether on-site vaccines that are not opened, reconstituted or pre-loaded can be safely returned to an appropriate storage facility. New vials should not be punctured and used.
2. Health providers pull forward people already booked into the clinic for vaccination, as available.
3. Eligible recipients who are confirmed to be on standby and are informed that they may or may not receive an immunization that same day are contacted. Health providers should create standby lists of potential recipients every day that the clinic is operational.
4. In the spirit of opportunistic immunization, on-site immunization teams may complete peer-to-peer immunization (i.e. immunize the immunization team members). Age should be used to determine who, amongst the immunizers, should be prioritized.
5. Offer COVID-19 vaccine to readily identifiable candidates, working to the best of their ability to identify people within the current second-dose interval. Prioritization of these candidates should consider age and randomization to select candidates.

COVID-19 Vaccine Allocations

Allocations will be provided to health system partners including AHA, SHA, ISC, NITHA (through ISC allocations as per the agreement with the Ministry), and participating pharmacies and physicians' offices. COVID-19 vaccine will be distributed across the province to align with the distribution of vaccine products and the schedule of first doses, and will ensure accessibility to the second dose of vaccine within the recommended interval.

Using high-vaccine allocation estimates from PHAC, it is estimated that second doses could begin in late May. Saskatchewan will be prepared to administer the highest possible allocation of doses as quickly as possible. The rate of administration will be adjusted according to the vaccine supply received. If other vaccine products are approved and allocated, Saskatchewan will be able to vaccinate its residents even sooner.