

Message regarding the AstraZeneca vaccine

May 12, 2021

Dear Patients,

Following the direction of the province yesterday (May 11), Ontario is immediately pausing administration of the first dose of the AZ vaccine.

For those who received their first dose of the AZ vaccine, we understand that there are many questions. Here is what we know now and are working to confirm for you.

Why was this change made now?

There are several reasons for this change:

- The rates of rare blood clots with this vaccine are rising – the province quoted a 1:60,000 chance.
- We are starting to see falling rates of COVID-19 infection in the province.
- There are increasing supplies of other vaccines coming into Ontario.

Should I have waited for a different vaccine?

If you have already been vaccinated, you did the right thing by protecting yourself and others around you. Having a first dose of any vaccine provides significant protection against serious illness and death should you become infected with COVID-19.

If you received the AZ vaccine within the past 28 days, the chances of serious side effects remain very small – but you should know the signs (see chart on next page), as these rare blood clots can be treated if addressed early. Please reach out to our office or seek emergency care if you experience any warning symptoms.

What about the second doses?

What this pause means for second doses is not clear at this moment. There is a more predictable supply of other vaccines coming and Canada should have information on mixing and matching different vaccine brands in the next 1 or 2 weeks based on a large study being conducted in the United Kingdom (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/vaccines-mix-and-match-1.6020986>).

Where can I get updates?

We will update you as soon as we have information. You can also check the provincial and our local public health unit website as well. Ontario's central vaccine management system has a record of when and where you were vaccinated and with which vaccine -- so no one will be left behind with a second dose.

Please remember – our clinics are open to you, by phone, by video or in person to answer any vaccination questions. We are here to help keep you safe and get through this pandemic together.

DON'T PANIC: IT IS NORMAL TO FEEL SOME MILD SIDE EFFECTS AFTER VACCINATION. VITT IS RARE AND HAS BETTER TREATMENT & OUTCOME WHEN IDENTIFIED EARLY. HERE'S WHAT TO KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR:

Not signs of VITT
talk to your primary care professional

- tiredness
- headache in first 3 days after vaccination
- muscle pain
- chills
- fever
- nausea
- pain, redness, or swelling at injection site

If your symptoms are **not** severe, you can discuss them (virtually or in-person) with your primary care professional. Symptoms in the first 3 days or over 28 days after vaccination are not VITT.

Signs of VITT
go to the nearest Emergency Department

Starting 4-28 days after AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD or Janssen/J&J vaccination:

- severe **headache** that does not go away
- **seizure**
- **difficulty moving** part of your body
- new **blurry** or **double vision** that does not go away
- **difficulty speaking**
- **shortness of breath**
- severe **chest, back, or abdominal pain**
- **unusual bleeding or bruising**
- new **reddish or purplish spots**, or **blood blisters**
- new, severe **swelling, pain, or colour change** of an arm or a leg