Community Clinic COVID-19 Vaccinations: Frequently Asked Questions

Be a Vaccine Positive Clinic
TOOLKIT

List of Topics:

Becoming a COVID-19 Vaccination Site

How does my clinic sign up to become a COVID-19 vaccination site? *(Updated)*
Physician clinics are welcome to participate in the administration of COVID-19 vaccine once several steps have been taken. Please complete the steps in order. For example, if you do not have number three, **do not** proceed to number four.

1. Ensure you meet the mandatory requirements
2. Have an active Immunization Direct Submission Mechanism (IDSM) or Okaki PHIX account
3. Have a vaccine appropriate refrigerator onsite
4. Sign up for a COVID-specific Alberta Vaccine Inventory (AVI) account

Clinics that meet all the mandatory requirements are not subject to an approval process however, some clinic settings may not be suitable. Generally speaking, the most ideal settings are those where a panel of patients seek ongoing primary care from healthcare providers.

IDSM registration
If your clinic is not already on IDSM, you will need to sign up as soon as possible. A user must complete an IDSM registration form and be authorized by a health practitioner to obtain access. If you have any technical issues or questions, please contact the eHealth Netcare Support Services team at: 1-855-643-8649 or ehealthsupport@cgi.com

Daily IDSM reporting is required once actively administering vaccines.

Appropriate vaccine fridge
Please be familiar with the cold chain requirements of the COVID vaccine. You should have a vaccine-appropriate refrigerator onsite (not on backorder).

COVID AVI registration
All interested clinics are required to register for a COVID-specific Alberta Vaccine Inventory (AVI) account specific to the COVID-19, pneumococcal and Influenza vaccines for ordering, reconciliation, and reporting of wastage, if they do not have one set up already.

For help finding your facility number, consult this document. If still having trouble, clinics who need assistance finding their 3 or 6 digit facility ID number can email: Health.Pracforms@gov.ab.ca

For assistance with AVI functions, please contact the AVI Helpdesk at AHRXSupport@gov.ab.ca or call: 1-844-213-3600.

Weekly reconciliation in AVI must occur when the clinic is open and COVID-19 vaccine is onsite, even if zero doses are administered. Clinics are required to complete their weekly reconciliation every Monday by 9 pm.

For questions about evidence or requirements email, backthevax@albertadoctors.org

Ordering Vaccine

How do I order vaccines?
Clinics can place their self-order through the COVID-specific AVI account. Please do not place more than one order per vaccine per week.

Moderna:
Moderna is available to order now. Please ensure you are ordering from the 14 dose SKU description is as follows:

- Covid-19 mRNA 1273-mRNA **14** dose/vial

Minimum orders are 1 vial (14 doses), and maximum orders are 20 vials (280 doses).

Pfizer – Adult Formulation:
Pfizer is available to order now.

Minimum order is 18 doses (3 vials) and maximum is 102 doses (17 vials).

Pfizer – Pediatric Formulation

Pfizer pediatric formulation is available to order now. It is listed in AVI as:
- COVID-19 BNT162b2 – mRNA Pediatric 5-11 years.

Minimum order is 10 doses (1 vial).

Information about ordering vaccine will be sent to clinics directly from Accuristix, and occasionally from backthevax@albertadoctors.org . This will include timeframes for ordering. The goal is to develop enough supply that specific 'windows' to order will no longer be needed.

If you are unfamiliar with ordering vaccine through AVI, please review the training materials on the AVI home page under Facility/Clinic Guides menu.

IMPORTANT: Please do not book specific appointments for patients until you receive your shipping confirmation email. You can create a short notice list of patients which can be activated as soon as the shipping confirmation email is received.

Please check 'approved amount' in AVI in case your clinic will receive less than requested.

How do I change my vaccine order?
You can contact Accuristix at 1-866-712-7250 or csralbertahealth@accuristix.com for assistance with correcting your order. Please note that they may not be able to accommodate the request.

How do I change my contact email or other information in the COVID-19 AVI system?
You can submit your change request to: AHRXSupport@gov.ab.ca

Preparing for Vaccine Delivery

When will my vaccine delivery arrive?
You will be contacted by the shipper, Accuristix 24-48 hours prior to delivery. Accuristix will send shipment notifications and order confirmations by email to your AVI primary contact email address. Please ensure you check this *daily* and make provisions for when you are out of office, or days the clinic is closed.

What supplies are shipped with the vaccine?
Clinics who have received the vaccine report receiving the following:
A large sharps container, needles, syringes, alcohol swabs, and post-vaccination band aids.

Booking Patients

When can I start booking vaccine appointments for my patients?

Do not book patients until you receive delivery confirmation from Accuristix with your delivery date. While you wait, you can develop a list of patients that are ready to receive immunization and once you receive shipping confirmation, you can finalize the booking times.

How can I convert vaccine hesitant patients?
Your clinic can play a significant role in reaching your vaccine-hesitant patients. Vaccine-hesitancy resources are available in our Be a Vaccine Positive Clinic toolkit.

Administering and Storing Vaccines

How long can I store the vaccine in the fridge?
Refrigerated undiluted adult Pfizer vaccine can be kept for 31 days upon receipt of vaccine UNLESS you receive a shipment that has begun thawing at the depot. Since there is a lot of Pfizer at the depot, they will sometimes have to send already thawed vaccine (thawed to fridge temp, not room temp). This means the refrigeration time of 31 days may already be started when you receive your vaccine shipments.

When you receive vaccine that has already begun its refrigeration storage time at the depot, a label will be on your vaccine shipment from Accuristix with the refrigeration date limit listed.

Refrigerated unpunctured Moderna vaccine can be kept for 30 days upon receipt of vaccine.

This includes the day it was shipped.

Refrigerated undiluted pediatric Pfizer can be kept for 10 weeks. Do not freeze the vaccine.

This content is summarized in our learning checklist, and is outlined in the storage and handling documents. It is *essential* that clinics are familiar with these storage and handling requirements.

Do we have to give patients the same vaccine they received for their first dose?
The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) has provided the following recommendations:
- For mRNA first doses
  - If readily available, offer the same vaccine for the second dose
  - If the same vaccine is not readily available, offer another mRNA vaccine recommended for use in that age group
- For AstraZeneca first doses
  - Either AstraZeneca or an mRNA vaccine may be offered for the second dose

You can support patients in making an informed decision about what is right for them. It is a good idea to document this conversation in your EMR.

Sources to consult to help advise your patients:
- Alberta Government COVID-19 Vaccine Program
- Second dose for AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD recipients Information
- Vaccines at a glance: Comparison table of COVID vaccines authorized in Canada
- NACI Rapid Response: Interchangeability of Authorized COVID-19 Vaccines

I am concerned about using my vaccine supply within 7 days, what can I do?
Although the refrigerated unpunctured vaccine does not expire in seven days (Moderna expires after 30 days, adult Pfizer after 31, pediatric Pfizer after 10 weeks), getting the vaccine administered in seven days is a commitment to help get Albertans vaccinated in the shortest time possible. Pharmacies too have this small window to use vaccine they receive in a shipment.

We understand it may be a challenge, and all we ask is that you try your best to administer within 7 days. ***Do not discard*** doses if not used within this timeframe.

Clinics that have been administering vaccine for a few weeks have shared some helpful tips:
- Email your paneled patients including ways for the vaccine-hesitant to interact with you. Your own patients are the priority, as your clinic can play a significant role in reaching your vaccine-hesitant patients. Vaccine-hesitancy discussion resources are available in our Be a Vaccine Positive Clinic toolkit.
- The HQCA has created a mechanism to identify your patients who have not received their COVID-19 vaccination. Using your panel report, physicians can reach out to unvaccinated patients and address barriers to vaccine uptake. For physicians who have not signed up for the panel reports, please visit https://request.hqca.ca
- Connect and partner with nearby clinics that are not administering vaccines.
- Connect with nearby pharmacies in the event they have vaccine-ready patients they might consider directing to you
- Check with your PCN in case they can offer support finding patients that are ready
- Partner with community organizations that support vulnerable or underserved populations
- Promote vaccine availability on your social media or website
- Contact VaxHunterAB@gmail.com. They can advertise your clinic on their Twitter account https://twitter.com/ab_vax
- Consider developing a vaccine wastage policy for your clinic. Our learning checklist includes the AHS wastage policy for consideration.
- Consider a walk-in clinic for a few hours one evening or weekend to use up remaining supply. This may not work logistically, and requires planning for optimal clinic flow, so consider and plan carefully if this approach would work for your clinic.

What age are the vaccines approved for? *(Updated)*
- Adult Pfizer is approved for ages 12 and up.
- Pediatric Pfizer is approved for children aged 5-11.
- Moderna is approved for ages 6 and up.

More questions about the vaccines? Consult our learning checklist.

I gave the wrong vaccine to a patient, what do I do?
Please consult this document to see if it addresses your question.

Can we give third or fourth doses (booster shots)? *(Updated)*
Third vaccine doses are now permitted for those age 12 and older at least five months after their second dose.

Fourth doses are available for:
- immunocompromised individuals 12 and older five months after their third dose.

- All people 70 and older
- First Nations, Metis or Inuit people 65 and older
- All residents of senior congregate care, regardless of age at least five months after third dose
- people 12 and older who require additional doses to meet international travel rules, however, these doses are not currently clinically recommended.

Information on eligibility can be found online.

Travellers to jurisdictions that do not recognize Covishield/AstraZeneca or mixed series doses can get additional mRNA dose(s) 4 weeks after their second dose. Proof of travel is not required.

To stay up to date with vaccine eligibility changes, please check the Alberta Government's COVID-19 vaccine page and COVID-19 news releases on a regular basis.

Billing Immunizations

How do I bill COVID-19 vaccinations?
Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan Bulletin: MED 242
AH released Bulletin MED 242 that outlines the requirements for claiming COVID-19 vaccinations. The two related codes are:
- 13.59V immunization and administration of COVID-19 vaccine (may be claimed for vaccine appointments that last 10 minutes or less)
- 13.59VA prolonged COVID-19 vaccination (for vaccine appointments that require more than 10 minutes of physician time with the patient)

These codes were developed with the understanding that physicians would set aside vaccine-specific blocks of time for eligible patients (many of our colleagues running the pilot sites are finding this setup works well). As such, the new codes for COVID-19 vaccinations have time requirements and may not be claimed with other visits occurring at the same time. If, on the other hand, physicians provide a COVID vaccine as part of a regular office visit (e.g. an 03.03A for an unrelated issue, and assuming all requirements of the visit fee are met), they are advised to bill the visit code plus health service code 13.59A, instead of the COVID-specific vaccination codes.

If you have questions about the billing process, I encourage you to reach out to the AMA's Billing Services team at billingadvice@albertadoctors.org.

Can I immunize patients who do not have an Alberta Health card?
There is no mechanism for clinics to obtain a Unique Lifetime Identifier (ULI) for out-of-province patients to bill and report in IDSM, therefore you are asked to direct those patients to 811 to book through AHS.

If you anticipate a large number of patients will not have an Alberta Health Card, you could connect with the AHS vaccination effort in your local area to work together.

Currently, there is no interprovincial billing arrangement enabling physicians to claim the COVID-19 vaccine fee codes when the vaccine is administered to out-of-province patients.

Reconciling Immunizations and lots

How do I reconcile immunizations and lots? *(Updated)*
Please ensure you are reporting your doses in IDSM and reconciling your lots in AVI *daily*.

Reconciliation must occur in your COVID AVI account **every week** the clinic is open when COVID-19 vaccine is onsite, even if zero doses are administered. Clinics are required to complete their weekly reconciliation every Monday by 9 pm.

The save button will not fully reconcile your inventory in the system, make sure you click **submit inventory** to complete the reconciliation process in AVI.

AVI training materials are available on the AVI home page under the Facility/Clinic Guides menu.

COVID-specific AVI support documents:
- COVID Create Vaccine Order
- COVID Receive Vaccine Order
- COVID Inventory Reconciliation

IDSM support documents:
https://www.albertanetcare.ca/learningcentre/IDSMTrainingMaterials.htm

What do I do if my vial is defective or short?
If there is a problem with your vial of Moderna of Pfizer, e.g. fewer doses than expected, please take the following steps:
1. Fill in the Product Problem Report. You need to scroll down to "Product Problem Form"
2. When reconciling in AVI, enter the dose(s) as Category: **Wasted**. Reason: **Product problem**.

How do I report expired doses?
Since thawed vaccine cannot be re-frozen, any unused doses need to be discarded appropriately on site (Not in the garbage) and reported as Category: **Expired** & Reason: **Expired Opened Multi-Dose Vials** in AVI. This includes:
- Vials that expire because they have not been used but are beyond the 30-day refrigeration limit for Moderna, 31 days for adult Pfizer or 10 weeks for pediatric Pfizer.
- Vial that are opened but not all doses can be used by end of day (24 hours for Moderna, 6 hours for adult Pfizer, 12 hours for pediatric Pfizer)

This reason can be used for both full, unpunctured vials as well as partial vials. For example, if 6 out of 14 Moderna doses in a vial were administered to patients, the adjustment would be -8.0 (see image below).

Lot Number	Exp Date	Quantity on Hand	Physical Inventory	Adjustment (+/-)	Category	Reason	Funding Source	Inactive	Add Row
3002544	2021/11/27	10	0	-10.0	Expired	Expired Opened Multi-dose V	P	☐	+

Showing 1 to 1 of 1 entries

Can I transfer unused vials or send them back to the depot?
Unused vials *cannot be sent back to the depot*.

Alberta Health does not routinely transfer vaccines from location to location. Very rare exceptions have been made for COVID, particularly when supply was less than optimal. There is a significant amount of work involved in this process, and is a last resort and rarely possible, considering many pharmacies are also struggling to use up their supply.

The exception to moving leftover vaccine that may be considered is if a **nearby pharmacy in the same building less than 5 minutes travel time, is willing to receive it.**

If you have had a discussion with a pharmacy and they are open to a transfer, and you meet the criteria below. please email backthvax@albertadoctors.org with the following information:
- When the vaccines expire (Must not be expiring within a week)
- How much you have left (Should be a significant amount, not a few vials)
- Are you able to provide digital copies of your daily temperature logs if asked? (Do not send them yet)
- Confirm that the pharmacy in the same building has agreed to accept this transfer and have enough demand

If we confirm that your clinic meets the criteria, next steps would be:
- AMA refers you to Alberta Health (AH).
- Alberta Health decide if they can make an exception to transfer the vaccine.
- Your clinic sends digital copies of your daily temperature logs directly to AH.
- AH review your temperature logs (2-3 days)
- If temperature logs look okay, the Provincial Vaccine Depot staff at AH process the electronic transfer of vaccine in AVI.
- A plan for transfer needs to be created by the sender and receiver: ensuring temperature maintenance and no shaking, less than 5 minutes travel time, in the same building.
- Vaccine is transferred to the pharmacy.
- The receiving pharmacy accepts the transfer in AVI

Can I enter my patients 'historical' COVID-19 vaccine doses into IDSM?
Clinics are instructed to only enter records into IDSM for COVID-19 vaccines administered in your clinic, and not enter 'historical' COVID-19 immunization events into IDSM.

Patients that received their COVID-19 immunization outside of Alberta can self-report using Alberta Health Services Immunization Record Submission. This allows for a detailed patient record containing all of the required information and ensures that a copy of the immunization record is uploaded during submission. If a patient is unsure about online submission they can be directed to 811 or visit an AHS public health clinic.

Contact Information

Who do I contact if I have questions?
- For questions about evidence or requirements email, backthevax@albertadoctors.org
- For policy related questions please email, health.imm@gov.ab.ca
- For shipping and ordering questions please contact Accuristix at: 1-866-712-7250 or csralbertahealth@accuristix.com
- For assistance with AVI functions, please contact the AVI Helpdesk at AHRXSupport@gov.ab.ca or call: 1-844-213-3600.

- If your clinic is having a technical issue with IDSM, you can access the eHealth Netcare Support Services at: 1-855-643-8649 or ehealthsupport@cgi.com