

## **Saskatchewan Vaccination Rollout Plan**

**Tuesday, February 10, 2021**

### **Key Messages**

- The goal of the COVID-19 immunization program is to:
  - Protect the most high risk and vulnerable.
  - Minimize serious illness and death.
  - Protect the capacity of the health care system.
  - Minimize the spread of COVID-19.
- Saskatchewan's phased approach to delivering the COVID-19 vaccination to residents started in December 2020 with the initial pilot of the delivery and storage of the Pfizer vaccine target health care providers in Regina.
- The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) issued guidance to provinces on the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine. Saskatchewan's Vaccine Oversight Committee is made up of representatives from the Ministry of Health, the Saskatchewan Health Authority, other government Ministries and Indigenous Services Canada. There is also an Indigenous Advisory Sub-committee, a Clinical Advisory Sub-Committee and a Municipal Advisory Sub-Committee providing advice to the Oversight Committee.

### **Phase One**

- Phase One of Saskatchewan's Vaccine Delivery Strategy is currently underway and is focused on vaccinating high-risk populations, people of advanced age, and health care workers who have been identified as a priority.
- Phase One includes all long-term care and personal care home residents and staff, health care workers in emergency departments, intensive care units, COVID-19 wards and COVID testing and assessment staff, residents 70 years and older in all communities, and residents 50 years and older living in remote/Northern Saskatchewan as vaccine is available.
- Recent announcements of reductions in vaccine allocations of both Pfizer and Moderna have interrupted supply levels and temporarily slowed the provincial vaccination rollout.
- Future vaccine supply amounts are unknown. This means that Phase One will likely take longer to complete.

### **Phase Two**

- Phase Two is expected to get underway in April depending on supply availability and is likely to overlap with Phase One.

- Phase Two is based on the foundation of age as the main risk factor and is focused on vaccinating the general population.
- Phase two will also include targeted vaccination for the clinically extremely vulnerable adults and residents and staff of emergency shelters and those in group homes for persons with intellectual disabilities. A complete list of eligible health conditions is available at [www.Saskatchewan.ca/covid19-vaccine](http://www.Saskatchewan.ca/covid19-vaccine).
- This vaccination campaign is large scale and complex. To get as many Saskatchewan residents who wish to be vaccinated as quickly as possible this phase will focus on age cohorts.
- It is evident that the highest risk factor for more serious disease and poor outcomes including death is age.
- Saskatchewan statistics show that the highest percentage of those who have died with COVID-19 have been older adults. In adults 80 and over, the percentage of cases who were hospitalized was 24.4%, compared with 12.7% for those over 60 years of age and 4.1% for people in the 40 to 59 year old age group.
- There are also a higher numbers of deaths in higher age categories. As of February 5, 2021, there were:
  - 80 and over – 175 deaths
  - 60-79 – 118 deaths
  - 40-59 – 27 deaths
  - 20-39 – 12 deaths
- Vaccination eligibility will focus on the general population in 10-year age increments **only** starting with ages 60 to 69, and proceeding to younger groups. For example, once Saskatchewan residents from age 70+ have been vaccinated, ages 60 to 69 will be next, followed by 50 to 59 and so on.
- Anyone who misses getting vaccinated in their age category may receive their vaccination in any of the subsequent age cohorts.
- Age groupings may broaden under the age of 50 if vaccine supplies allow.
- Close collaboration with First Nations and Metis leadership will assist in timely vaccination delivery to those communities. Through the Indigenous Advisory Sub-Committee of the Immunization Oversight Committee we will work with First Nations leadership to ensure effective communication regarding vaccine delivery in Indigenous populations.

### **Vaccination Locations**

- There will be a wide variety of public access for immunization including mass immunization clinics, drive-through sites, mobile sites, pharmacies, and more options in the community.

### **How will I know where to go?**

Information will be publicly shared to let you know:

- When it's your time to be vaccinated.
- How to register for a vaccine appointment, or locations of walk-in clinics.
- The different types of immunization clinics available.
- How to find the closest clinics to you.

### **Information will be included in:**

- Advertising in local media
- Social media
- Online ads
- Local publications
- Posters
- News conferences

A full listing of clinic locations and times and online booking will be available at [Saskatchewan.ca/COVID19-vaccine](https://www.saskatchewan.ca/COVID19-vaccine). A toll-free phone line to allow residents to book appointments through a dedicated call centre will also be available before widespread public immunizations get underway.

## **Questions and Answers**

### **Q. Why are you vaccinating by age groups and not by risk factors such as disease or immunocompromising health conditions or higher risk occupations?**

A. Phase One includes priority groups such as long term and personal care home residents and staff, health care workers responding to COVID-19, people over 70 in the community and over 50 in northern and remote communities.

Vaccinating by age cohort is the most rapid and efficient way to deliver the immunizations while also capturing vulnerable individuals within that age range.

Vaccinating by age demographics allows us to more quickly launch mass immunization clinics which will more rapidly reach vulnerable or immunocompromised individuals in lower age categories.

Phase two does include vulnerable adults in group living settings for intellectual disabilities and emergency shelters. Phase two will also include a broad list of clinically extremely vulnerable adults. For a complete list of eligible immunocompromised health conditions please visit [sask.ca/covid19-vaccine](https://www.sask.ca/covid19-vaccine).

We have been and will continue to collaborate closely with our First Nations and Metis partners to allocate and administer vaccines to First Nations communities.

Every vaccination given will contribute to bringing us closer to a herd immunity in our province.

**Q: I am worried about missing my turn when I'm eligible. How will I know when I can receive a vaccination?**

A. Many individuals wish to receive the vaccine as soon as possible and are concerned about missing their opportunity. Please be assured, eligibility and availability for vaccine will be communicated broadly for public awareness. If you miss getting vaccinated during your age group in your area you may get vaccinated in any of the subsequent age categories.

Information will be publicly shared to let you know:

- When it's your time to be vaccinated.
- How to register for a vaccine appointment.
- The different types of immunization clinics available.
- How to find the closest clinics to you.

**Q. What if I think I can't wait. Can I go to a clinic in another community that is offering vaccine before my area?**

A. At this point of Phase One, all vaccines are available to priority groups. While this is primarily long term and personal care home residents and staff and health care workers responding to COVID-19, the eligible populations are broader in northern communities. This also includes people over 70 living in the community as vaccine is available. While there is no barrier to travelling for vaccine the residents over 70 in targeted communities will be contacted directly by public health.

**Q. How long will it take to get everyone vaccinated in Saskatchewan?**

A. It is expected that anyone who wants the vaccine will have access to it by the fall. Depending on the availability of the vaccine it could take until late fall to have all residents vaccinated who desire it.

**Q. Can my children be vaccinated?**

A. At this time the Moderna vaccine is only approved for those over 18. The Pfizer vaccine has been approved for people over 16 years of age. As more testing is done by the manufacturers and more options come on the market we will likely see a vaccine approved for children. At this time, children appear to be a very low risk for serious disease from COVID-19.

**Q. Can I stop wearing a mask after I get vaccinated?**

A. It is important to continue to follow all public health measures until Saskatchewan's Chief Medical Health Officer indicates any changes to restrictions.

We will likely pull back slowly on restrictive measures as the percentage of the population vaccinated is increased sufficiently to significantly reduce the transmission of the COVID-19 virus and the pressure on our health system is decreased

**Q. Where can I go to find out more information about clinics?**

A. Information on the vaccine is updated frequently and available at [www.Saskatchewan.ca/covid-19-vaccine](http://www.Saskatchewan.ca/covid-19-vaccine). Clinic locations and hours of operation and registration for appointments will also be available online.

There will be many ways to access vaccinations with clinics located across the province. Vaccinations will be available through appointments at public health clinics, mass immunization clinics, pharmacies and drive-through options.

**Q. In these new plans, why are there no additional health care workers prioritized to receive vaccine earlier than the general population?**

The more people who receive vaccination, the more protected our entire population is as a whole, including the health care workforce.

Vaccinating by age is the most rapid and efficient way to deliver the immunizations consistently across the province, while also capturing vulnerable individuals within that age range. This will also more quickly target those individuals who have seen the most severe illness and death as a result of COVID-19.

Health providers also have the benefit of additional protections in place where they work, such as visiting restrictions and an ample supply of personal protective equipment and proper training in how to effectively use it.

Health Care Workers will also be prioritized in phase 2 by way of their age or if they are considered clinically extremely vulnerable. A complete list of eligible health conditions is available on the COVID-19 website.