

Smithville Medical Centre

Family Health Team

230 Canborough St., Box 218
SMITHVILLE, ON L0R 2A0

February 19th, 2021

Dear Patients,

In 2020, the arrival of the COVID-19 virus brought many changes to the way we live our lives. As we begin 2021, we see positive changes on the horizon, with vaccines on their way.

We recommend that everyone who is eligible receive the vaccine when it becomes available in order to keep ourselves safe, our community safe, and to put an end to this pandemic.

All of the physicians and nurse practitioners at our clinic have either already received the vaccine or are planning to receive the vaccine, in order to stay healthy and continue to provide care for you.

The Smithville FHT is committed to providing you accurate information on the COVID-19 vaccines. Please check our website (www.smithvillefht.ca) regularly for vaccine updates and answers to frequently asked questions.

Here are some answers to common questions that have arisen so far:

How do the vaccines work?

The vaccines use mRNA technology. mRNA has been studied and used for cancer treatments for upwards of 30 years, but this is the first vaccine using the technology. A COVID-19 mRNA vaccine provides the genetic recipe to tell our cells to produce the “spike protein” which instructs our immune system to develop antibodies against COVID-19. The vaccines cannot give someone COVID-19, as they do not use the live virus that causes the disease. The vaccine does not stay in your body and cannot alter your DNA in any way. After the protein is made, the cell breaks down the recipe instructions (mRNA).

How effective are the vaccines?

The two vaccines currently approved in Canada (Pfizer and Moderna) are 94-95% effective at reducing COVID-19 infection.

Were any steps skipped to rush vaccine approval and production?

No steps were skipped in the safety testing and approval of these vaccines. The vaccines were produced faster than other vaccines because of never-before-seen levels of collaboration and funding around the world. Normally, vaccine clinical trials need 6000-8000 people for the approval process. The Pfizer trial had over 43,000 people and the Moderna trial had over 30,000 people.

Is it safe for people with allergies to get the vaccine?

Severe allergic reactions are very rare with the COVID-19 vaccines, occurring in only 0.004% of doses given. Everyone who receives the vaccine will be monitored for at least 15 minutes after the vaccine is administered. If you have had a severe allergic reaction to a specific component of the COVID-19 vaccine, you should not receive the vaccine. Polyethylene glycol (PEG) is a component of the vaccine, so if you have an allergy to PEG, you should not receive the vaccine. PEG is found in many products such as Extra Strength Tylenol, Advil Liqui-Gels, Laxaday, and enteric coated daily low dose aspirin (81mg), so if you can take these products without allergies, then you are not allergic to PEG. If you had a severe allergic reaction to the first dose of the vaccine, you should not receive the second dose of the vaccine. If you have allergies to food, pets, or other medications, Health Canada recommends vaccination. If you are unsure, talk to your healthcare provider.

Is it safe for pregnant or breastfeeding women to get the vaccine?

Pregnant and breastfeeding women were not included in trials for the currently available vaccines. A small number of women were included in the trial and later found out that they were pregnant, and there were no safety issues in these women. Pregnant women are at higher risk of serious illness if they get COVID-19 infection. The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada has therefore stated that “women who are pregnant or breastfeeding should be offered vaccination at anytime if they are eligible and no contraindications exist.” This is based on the understanding that the risk of infection from COVID-19 outweighs the theorized and undescribed risk of being vaccinated. Pregnant or breastfeeding women are encouraged to discuss with their primary healthcare provider if they have concerns.

When will I be able to get the vaccine? How will I know it is available?

The first vaccines are being given to healthcare workers and high risk populations. We are following government guidance and prioritizing our higher risk patients (based on age and medical conditions). You will be contacted when the vaccine is available for you. We are not sure of the timing of this yet. The government’s plan is to have the vaccine available to all patients starting August 2021, however, this may be earlier or later depending on vaccine supply and whether new vaccines are approved.

Our office has had to make many changes over the past year in order to continue to provide care safely. We thank you for your continued understanding, and for keeping us and other patients safe as you wear masks, keep your distance, and wash your hands.

We look forward to a time when the vaccine allows us to return to a more connected life!

Warmly,

The Smithville Family Health Team