

# Vaccines 101: What Patients Need to Know

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This fact sheet provides clear, evidence-based information to help patients and caregivers understand what vaccines are, how they work, and why they are an important part of protecting health.

## Why This Matters to Patients

Vaccines protect individuals and communities, especially people at higher risk due to age, chronic illness, or weakened immune systems. Clear information helps patients make informed decisions and reduces confusion caused by misinformation.

## What Is a Vaccine?

Vaccines help the immune system recognize and fight infections before they cause serious illness. For adults, vaccines are especially important for preventing complications, hospitalizations, and long-term health impacts.

## What's in a Vaccine?

Vaccines contain an active ingredient (called an antigen) that teaches the immune system how to respond to a virus or bacteria. They may also include small amounts of other ingredients, such as stabilizers or adjuvants, which help the vaccine work properly. All ingredients are reviewed for safety.

## Vaccine Safety and Side Effects

Vaccines are tested in large clinical trials and continuously monitored once in use. Most side effects are mild and temporary, such as soreness or fatigue. Serious side effects are rare and closely investigated.

## Different Types of Vaccines

There are several types of vaccines, including inactivated vaccines, protein-based vaccines, and newer technologies like mRNA. Having different vaccine types allows people with different health needs to be protected.

Developed by the Health Coalition of Alberta to support patient education, informed decision-making, and equitable access to vaccines in Alberta. Program details and eligibility may change; patients are encouraged to confirm current information with a health care provider or public health clinic.