

How Vaccines Are Approved, Recommended, and Funded in Canada

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This fact sheet explains how vaccines move from research to patient use in Canada, why several decision-makers are involved, and why public funding can differ across provinces.

Why This Matters to Patients

Patients may be told a vaccine is recommended but not publicly covered. Understanding how decisions are made helps patients ask informed questions, plan for potential costs, and advocate for equitable access.

From Research to Approval

Vaccines are studied over many years through laboratory research and multiple phases of clinical trials. Health Canada reviews this evidence to determine whether a vaccine is safe, effective, and manufactured to high quality standards.

National Recommendations

After approval, independent experts review the evidence and make recommendations about who should receive a vaccine. These recommendations consider medical evidence as well as feasibility.

Procurement and Funding Decisions

Vaccines intended for public programs go through a national procurement process to negotiate price and supply. Provinces and territories then decide which vaccines are publicly funded and who is eligible. This can result in differences in access across Canada.

How Vaccines Are Provided in Alberta

Once a vaccine is approved and recommended, Alberta determines how it is delivered through provincial immunization programs. Publicly funded vaccines are typically provided through public health clinics, community pharmacies, and primary care providers, with provincial policy determining which vaccines are funded, where they are delivered, and who is eligible. As a result, access in Alberta may differ from national recommendations, with some vaccines publicly funded only for specific age groups or people at higher risk of severe illness. Current information on publicly funded vaccines, eligibility, and recommended timing is available in Alberta's Immunization Schedule:

<https://www.alberta.ca/immunization-routine-schedule>

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.