



COVID-19 Vaccine Information Sheet for Patients

Heart Transplant Recipients

Novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-COV-2). Many people now have questions about the COVID-19 vaccines. It is important to understand that information about COVID-19, treatments and vaccines is changing quickly. This information sheet will be updated as new information becomes available.

As of January 8, 2021, there are two authorized vaccines available in Canada - *Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19*, which was approved by Health Canada on December 9, 2020, and *Moderna COVID-19 (mRNA-1273)*, which was approved by Health Canada on December 23, 2020. Both are mRNA vaccines that is given in 2-dose schedule. Pfizer reports that 2-doses of their vaccine gives 95% protection against COVID-19 in a general population over 16 years of age. Moderna reports that vaccine efficacy was 94% in preventing symptomatic COVID-19 disease. Other vaccines are in the process of development and review and we anticipate authorized vaccines to change over time.

Is the vaccine safe?

The vaccines are approved by Health Canada and has met Canadian standards for safety. There are no significant safety concerns reported from the studies in the general population, but many patients had common side effects of the vaccine such as pain at the injection site, fever, headache, fatigue, joint pain.

Currently, the COVID-19 vaccine is given alone and not at same time as other vaccines. COVID-19 vaccine should be separated by 2-4 weeks from other vaccines.

The mRNA vaccines are not live vaccines.

Who should NOT get the vaccine:

- Severe allergic reaction (ex. anaphylaxis) to previous dose of mRNA COVID-19 or any components or its container

What should Heart Transplant Patients do?

The University of Ottawa Heart Institute Transplant Program has always recognized the importance of vaccines. To date, the COVID-19 vaccine has not been studied in immunocompromised patients, including heart

transplant patients. We do not yet have data on efficacy and safety in transplant patients. However, expert opinion is that most transplant patients can receive the vaccine when it becomes available to them.

The National Advisory Committee on Immunizations in Canada (NACI) highlights that the vaccine was not studied in immunocompromised or transplant patients. NACI suggests the vaccine can be given on a case-by-case basis if benefits of vaccine (preventing infection) outweigh the possible risks of vaccine side effects. The Ministry of Health in Ontario has recommended that those who are immunosuppressed may choose to receive the vaccine after informed consent. Specifically, that patients understand that there is insufficient evidence for use of the vaccine and that it may not be as effective.

The Canadian Society of Transplantation (CST), The American Society of Transplantation (AST) and the International Society for Heart and Lung Transplantation (ISHLT) have advised this vaccine **can be given to transplant patients** but recognize that we do not know if it will work as well in transplant patients.

If patients give informed consent, we suggest

Post-Transplant Patients

Receive the COVID-19 vaccine starting >1 month after transplant

Receive the COVID-19 vaccine >1 month after you have been treated for rejection

Pre-Transplant Patients

Optimal timing for COVID-19 vaccine is to complete 2 doses by 2 weeks before transplant

If you go for transplant before 2nd dose of the vaccine, we will complete the vaccine series starting 1- month post-transplant

If you are on other medications that lower your immune system, please ask about when you should get the vaccine.

Please ensure you keep track of which vaccine you get and the dates of both doses. We will collect this information for your health records. If you experience any side effects from the vaccine, please let our team know.

Since we do not yet know how well this vaccine will work in transplant patients, you still need to be vigilant about protecting yourself from exposures. Please continue use of face masks, hand hygiene and physical distancing. We encourage that household and close contacts of our patients get vaccinated against COVID-19 when the vaccine becomes available. We recommend that you and your household get the influenza vaccine and ask our team about our routine vaccines if you are not up to date.

Please continue to use of face masks, frequent hand hygiene and physical distancing even if you got the COVID-19 vaccine.

Please note, there are studies about COVID-19 being done at UOHI and TOH, please consider participating and let your health care team know if you are interested.

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