Key Messages:
- The AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine will now be offered to individuals aged 40 and over at participating pharmacies and primary care practices across Ontario.
- Individuals with Highest Risk health conditions can call the provincial booking line for COVID-19 vaccine appointments.
- There are updated instructions for individuals who are eligible for exceptions to the extended second dose interval.
- Individuals eligible for exceptions to the extended dosing interval should receive their second dose of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine after 12 weeks.
- The Ministry of Health released a decision-making tool about COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy or breastfeeding.
- Physicians can access the Ontario eConsult Service for access to advice from COVID-19 related specialties.

NEW: Age eligibility for AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine expanded to 40+
- Based on the review of data from Europe and the United Kingdom, Health Canada announced on April 14, 2021, that no specific risk factors for adverse effects were identified, and the use of AstraZeneca would not be restricted in any specific populations.
- More information on Health Canada’s review of the vaccine is available at: https://healthycanadians.gc.ca/recall-alert-rappel-avis/hc-sc/2021/75389a-eng.php
- The province of Ontario has announced that starting Tuesday, April 20, the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine will be offered to individuals aged 40 and over at pharmacies across the province. Eligible individuals can book an appointment at participating pharmacies by accessing: https://covid-19.ontario.ca/vaccine-locations
- Primary care practices that are already administering the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine will also be applying the new age eligibility criteria and will be contacting all eligible patients within their care.
- How physicians can help: Patients rely on physicians for critical health information. We recommend letting your eligible patients know that appointments are available to them at participating pharmacies and discuss the benefits of getting the vaccine. Please see the resources section below for more information.
UPDATE: Booking instructions for those with Highest Risk health conditions

- Individuals with the following Highest Risk health conditions and one caregiver are eligible for COVID-19 vaccination in Ontario:
  - Organ transplant recipients (including patients waitlisted for transplant);
  - Hematopoietic stem cell transplant recipients;
  - People with neurological diseases in which respiratory function may be compromised (e.g., motor neuron disease, myasthenia gravis, multiple sclerosis)
  - Haematological malignancy diagnosed less than one year ago;
  - Kidney disease eGFR < 30

- As of April 16, 2021, people with Highest Risk health conditions and their caregivers can call the provincial call centre at 1-888-999-6488 to book an appointment for their first and second dose appointments at Peel Public Health clinics. They will be asked to identify and confirm themselves as having a Highest Risk health condition.

- For further information on how those with eligible conditions can book at both Peel Public Health and hospital clinics, please visit: https://peelregion.ca/coronavirus/vaccine/book-appointment/

UPDATE: Instructions for exceptions to extended dosing interval

- As identified in Health Professionals Update (April 1, 2021) Vol. 14, No. 13, there are a limited number of exceptions to extended dosing intervals including:
  - Transplant recipients (including solid organ transplants and hematopoietic stem cell transplants)
  - Patients receiving stable, active treatment for malignant hematologic disorders on immunocompromising therapy (e.g., chemotherapy, targeted therapies, immunotherapy)
  - Patients with nonhematologic malignant solid tumors on immunocompromising therapy

- In Peel Region, these patient groups will require a letter from a physician to confirm that they have one of the above eligible health conditions to receive an exception to the extended dosing interval. This letter should be presented at both the first and second appointment.

- When booking through the provincial call center, second doses will automatically be booked at the extended dosing interval (16 weeks). Patients eligible for exceptions as listed above, will be required to bring their letter to their first dose appointment. The clinic staff will then adjust the timing of their second dose appointment.

- Further instructions are forthcoming for eligible individuals who have already received their first dose and need to re-book their second dose at a shortened interval. These details will be communicated shortly.

- Caregivers will continue to receive their second dose after 16 weeks and are not eligible for the exception.

UPDATE: Exceptions to extended dosing intervals and the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine

- Individuals eligible for exceptions to the extended dosing interval should receive their second dose of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine after 12 weeks.

- The dose interval indicated in the product monograph for the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine is 4-12 weeks. Based on available evidence, the Ministry of Health has indicated that 12 weeks has been shown to provide the best immune response.

- Eligible individuals may receive their second dose between 4-12 weeks if after conversation with their physician it is determined that there is a special circumstance requiring them to receive their dose sooner (e.g., timing with chemotherapy treatment).
NEW: COVID-19 Vaccination in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding
• On April 16, the Ministry of Health released a decision-making tool for COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy and breastfeeding.
• The information applies to the Pfizer BioNTech and Moderna vaccines.

NEW: Accessing COVID-19 advice through Ontario eConsult Service
• The Ontario eConsult Service offers easy and timely access to specialist advice, including COVID-19 related specialties. The COVID-19 specialties allow for population-based, non-patient specific clinical questions, as well as patient-specific eConsult questions.

REMINDEERS
Physician vaccinator callout
If you are a physician interested in working at Peel Public Health immunization clinics as a COVID-19 immunizer, please fill out the following survey: https://www.surveymonkey.ca/r/RNB2ZBY

Center for Effective Practice
Physicians can refer to this Center for Effective Practice resource on all COVID-19 vaccines that have been authorized for use in Canada: https://tools.cep.health/tool/covid-19-vaccines/