

COVID-19 Immunization: Medical Exemption Policy

September 24, 2021

This Policy is issued under the direction of the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH).

Purpose

The purpose of the Policy is to outline the conditions that constitute a medical exemption from COVID-19 immunization.

Policy Direction

Almost all Albertans can receive a COVID-19 vaccine, and should.

Religious and philosophical exemptions are not permitted.

Medical Exemptions

The following conditions constitute a medical exemption from COVID-19 immunization:

- Had an anaphylactic reaction following the first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, has been assessed by an allergist/immunologist, and future doses of any COVID-19 vaccine (viral vector or mRNA) are contraindicated,
- Developed a serious adverse event following COVID-19 immunization (e.g., Guillain-Barré syndrome, Acute Disseminated Encephalomyelitis (ADEM)) and a MOH has determined that future doses of COVID-19 vaccine are contraindicated, or
- Had an anaphylactic reaction to a component of COVID-19 vaccine that restricts administration of any COVID-19 vaccines available in Canada.

In addition, individuals who are participating in COVID-19 vaccine trials (eg. Medicago) are eligible for a medical exemption.

Medical Deferrals

Medical deferrals (postponement) of the second dose of COVID-19 vaccine may be indicated in certain situations. If deferral is recommended, a medical exemption letter can be provided explicitly stating the length of time for which the exemption is valid.

Examples of reasons for medical deferrals include:

- Developed myocarditis following the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine and it is recommended to defer the second dose of mRNA vaccine until more data is available,
- Developed a serious adverse event following COVID-19 immunization (e.g. Bell's palsy) following immunization and MOH has recommended deferral of second dose until individual has recovered,
- Had an anaphylactic reaction following the first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine and awaiting allergist assessment, or
- Solid organ transplant recipients or Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplant (HSCT) recipients post transplant until clearance is received to resume immunization.

Medical Exemption Letter

As per CMOH Order 43-2021, the vaccine medical exemption letter must be written by a physician or nurse practitioner and must include the following:

- Name of the individual to whom the exemption applies; (and should include their address)
- Name, phone number, contact information, professional registration number, and signature of the authorizing health professional;
- Date on which the written confirmation was provided;
- Length of time the exemption is valid (up to one year from the date on which written confirmation was provided).

The vaccine medical exemption letter should also include statement that there is a medical reason for the individual's exemption from being fully immunized against COVID-19; however, do not include specific information about the nature of the medical contraindication to immunization.

The Policy applies only to COVID-19 immunization in the context of Alberta's Restrictions Exemption Program. See [COVID-19 info for Albertans](#) for more information on the Program.

For additional information see [COVID-19 Scientific Advisory Group Rapid Brief – Medical Exemptions for COVID-19 Vaccine](#) Table 1 and 2. (September 7, 2021)