



ATU COVID-19 VACCINE FAQ

Throughout this pandemic, ATU has been fighting to protect the safety and health of our members and the communities we serve. Although we have lost far too many members, we have saved many more by winning important safety and health protections. Our efforts have been designed to buy time until safe and effective vaccines became available. That time has arrived.

Vaccines from multiple manufacturers have now been approved, but widespread participation is far more important than receiving any one particular vaccine. Although each vaccine is slightly different, our collective effort to vaccinate most of the population is what will ultimately protect us from this deadly disease.

AstraZeneca Available in Canada only

Should transit workers get vaccinated?

Yes. Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect yourself, your family, your coworkers, your community, and the transit industry from COVID-19.

We all have a part to play in ending this pandemic.

ATU is following the guidance of medical and health experts who recommend widespread vaccination, in addition to our other tools, such as masks and social distancing, to help bring an end to this terrible pandemic. But the vaccines will only be as effective as the number of people who get them. Widespread participation is vitally important to get our countries back to normal. Through vaccination we can prevent more illness and death, protect our families, and soon welcome riders back to our transit systems.

Is the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine safe?

Yes. Every study and every phase of the trials for the approved AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine have been reviewed by Health Canada. No serious safety concerns were reported. On April 23, 2021, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization recommended that the AstraZeneca vaccine be administered only to adults aged 30 and older due to extremely rare reports of blood clots associated with low levels of blood platelets, however Health Canada has not placed restrictions on the vaccine's use in adults. Provinces will determine the availability of the AstraZeneca vaccine to their own demographic groups.

Large trials were conducted by medical and health experts.

The approved vaccine has been developed through a transparent and rigorous process that included a diverse group of over 11,000 trial participants from the UK and Brazil. Adults that faced high potential for exposure to COVID-19, including health care and other social setting workers, were prioritized for participation in the trials.

Talk to your doctor.

If you are concerned about a personal health condition or medication interactions; if you are pregnant or breastfeeding; or, if you have a history of severe allergic reaction to injectables or vaccines, you should discuss vaccination with your doctor.

You might experience minor side effects.

Any vaccine or medication can cause side effects. You might experience side effects following your first or second dose of the approved vaccine, however these are usually minor, such as a sore arm or low-grade fever, and go away within a few days. No severe allergic reactions were reported during the trials, and they are expected to be very rare. The approved vaccine does not contain the SARS-CoV-2 virus and cannot infect you with COVID-19.

*More than **242 million** doses of the COVID-19 vaccines have been administered in the United States and Canada.*

(as of April 26, 2021)

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Is the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine effective?

Yes. The approved AstraZeneca vaccine has been shown to be about 62% effective at preventing symptoms caused by COVID-19 for adults ages 18-65. No one who received the vaccine died from COVID-19. You should take the vaccine even if you have previously been infected by COVID-19 because we aren't sure how long your natural immunity will last. Currently, there is not enough evidence to determine the efficacy of the vaccine in adults older than 65, however real-world results in regions where the vaccine has been used suggest that there is a benefit for this age group and that there are no serious safety concerns. As a result, Health Canada has approved the vaccine for use in adults older than 65.

Protection takes time.

The approved vaccine requires two doses to be given four to 12 weeks apart, and it does take time for immunity to build up in your body. Protection against illness does not start until about three weeks after the first dose and the vaccine is not fully effective until about two weeks after the second dose. Right now, we do not know how long someone is protected from COVID-19 after vaccination and this is the subject of additional studies. Booster shots might be required in the future.

The virus is constantly evolving.

Scientists are working to determine how effective approved COVID-19 vaccines will be against new variants of the virus that have been recently discovered in the United Kingdom, South Africa, and elsewhere. While it appears that existing vaccines, including AstraZeneca's, will provide protection against illness, booster shots for specific variants could be required in the future. Rapid vaccination and continued use of prevention measures are still important to limit the spread of, and illness caused by, COVID-19.

Do I still need to wear a mask and practice social distancing?

Yes. Stopping the pandemic requires that we use every tool and measure available. All of the approved COVID-19 vaccines work with your immune system so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. Other steps, like wearing a mask, social distancing, good ventilation, and regular hand washing, help reduce your chance of being exposed to the virus or spreading it to others.

We still need to look out for each other.

Trials of all approved vaccines were primarily designed to determine if vaccinated participants were protected from illness caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. They did not determine if participants could contract the virus without symptoms and then spread COVID-19 to others. Medical and health experts are hopeful that vaccinated people won't be able to spread the virus, but more research is needed. In the meantime, everyone — even vaccinated people — will need to remain vigilant.

When will COVID-19 vaccines be available to transit workers?

Availability of approved COVID-19 vaccines to transit workers will vary widely by state, province, and city. This includes both the number and brand of vaccines at any given location. Individuals will not be able to choose which manufacturer's vaccine they receive. You should contact your local health department for details about the rollout of vaccines in your area.

Essential transit workers have been prioritized.

The ATU International and ATU Canada called on our federal governments to prioritize transit workers for vaccine access and they listened. The CDC's scientific advisors recommended that public transit workers be included in Phase 1b of vaccine distribution with other frontline essential workers in the US. In Canada, Health Canada's advisors recommended that essential workers be included in Stage 2.

States and provinces will make final decisions.

Despite this federal guidance, states and provinces will make final determinations about vaccine distribution. Each jurisdiction is moving through phases at different speeds and prioritizing different parts of the population. In some jurisdictions, ATU members will become eligible for the vaccine due to their age or underlying health conditions before they become eligible as essential transit workers.

Visit <https://www.atu.org/covid-19/> for more information.

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