

### QUESTIONS UNIQUE TO CHRISTIAN HORIZONS

#### ***Q: When will Christian Horizons' Direct Support Employees and People who use our services have access to Covid-19 vaccines?***

**A:** At this time (January 26<sup>th</sup>) all employee, and people who use our services have had access to the first two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine. Access to booster doses of COVID-19 vaccines is being determined by local public health departments however access is being facilitated throughout the organization. Christian Horizons has begun advocacy for access to 4<sup>th</sup> doses for the people who use our services as needed.

#### ***Q Will the COVID-19 vaccine be mandatory for employees and people who use services?***

**A:** Christian Horizons will follow provincial and ministry requirements around COVID-19 vaccines.

Ontario has released additional guidance around COVID-19 vaccines and the developmental services sector which include the requirement for employees, staff, contractors, volunteers, students, and persons who provide services in an Education and Community Partnership program to provide:

- Proof of full vaccination against COVID-19 or
- Written proof of a medical reason provided by a physician or registered nurse in the extended class that sets out: (i) a documented medical reason for not being fully vaccinated against COVID-19, and (ii) the effective time period for the medical reason; or
- Proof of completing an education session approved by the Covered Organization (Christian Horizons) about the benefits of COVID-19 vaccination prior to declining vaccination for any reason other than a medical reason.
- Where a required individual does not provide proof of being fully vaccinated, they will need to submit to regular antigen point of care testing for COVID-19 and demonstrate a negative result, at intervals to be determined by the Covered Organization (Christian Horizons), which must be at a minimum of every seven days

To read the direction from MCCSS see [here](#)

An updated COVID-19 Vaccination Policy is available [here](#).

#### ***Q: Will employees and people who use services still need to use PPE after being vaccinated?***

**A:** At this time, the recommendation remains that PPE is worn after having been vaccinated.

When testing the currently approved COVID-19 vaccines the trials focused on protection for the individual who received the vaccine. All the vaccines effectively reduce the risk of hospitalization, ICU admission and death as a result of COVID-19. We have seen in different countries the lessening of PPE requirements as vaccinations go up and COVID-19 cases come down. It is expected that Canada will approach things similarly.

Christian Horizons will continue to follow both the Provincial Government and local ministry guidelines.

#### ***Q: Is it possible to test positive for COVID-19 after being vaccinated?***

# Covid-19 Vaccine

## Frequently Asked Questions



**A:** Receiving a COVID-19 vaccine will not cause you to test positive for COVID-19 when having a test done. This is because there is no live virus in any of the available or in development COVID-19 vaccines.

It is possible to still become sick with COVID-19 after being vaccinated. The likelihood of becoming infected after being vaccinated is significantly lower (65-95% depending on the vaccine) with the original and delta strains of the virus. The Omicron strain of the virus appears to circumvent immunization after 2 doses of a vaccine however those who are vaccinated continue to have reduced risk of admission to hospital, ICU admission and death because of COVID-19.

### ***Q: What do we know about potential Long-Term Effects from COVID-19 vaccines?***

**A:** Viral Vector vaccines like the AstraZeneca and Johnson and Johnson vaccines have been around for decades with no reported long-term complications.

mRNA vaccines have been in human trials for various illnesses for over a decade, and there have been no reported long-term concerns. See [here](#).

Further as shared by our guest panelists Dr. Gautier and Dr. Sankar on May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021 vaccines are made to be destroyed by our body so that it can train the immune system. This means there is nothing left in your system except for the immune memory to cause long term side effects. Long term side effects in medicine are caused from prolonged regular exposure to a treatment over numerous years (eg. Daily medication).

### ***Q: Do the vaccines work against the different variants?***

**A:** Real world delivery of COVID-19 vaccines in the United Kingdoms, United States of America and Israel have shown significant decreases in the number of COVID-19 related admissions to hospital among people who are vaccinated, including when they contract one of the variants. Leading researchers to conclude that the vaccines are showing effectiveness against the variants of concern including the Delta and Omicron Variant.

### ***Q: Can you still transmit COVID-19 if you have been vaccinated?***

**A:** To transmit a virus from one person to another, the infected individual must have sufficient virus in their system to risk it passing to someone else. What has been shown with widespread vaccine campaigns is a significant decrease in community spread of COVID-19 when vaccination rates are high. This suggests that while it may still be possible the likelihood is significantly reduced. Recently with the Omicron Variant infection rates have been nearly the same in those that are vaccinated and those that are not. However, evidence has shown that people who are vaccinated have a "peak and drop" in their viral load quicker than those that are not vaccinated.

### ***Q: How were the COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in Canada?***

**A:** In Canada an Interim order pathway was established for any vaccines, medications, or tests related to COVID-19. "An interim order is one of the fastest mechanisms available to the federal government for putting in place temporary regulations to help make health products available to address large-scale public health emergencies.

# Covid-19 Vaccine

## Frequently Asked Questions



This interim order facilitates timely access for Canadians to drugs and vaccines that have demonstrated the ability to diagnose, prevent, treat or cure COVID-19. The interim order introduces temporary regulations to expedite the authorization for importing, selling and advertising COVID-19-related drugs without compromising patient safety."

For more information on this and additional links see [here](#)

### ***Q: People of childbearing years both men and women may have concerns about fertility issues related to COVID-19, what is known about this?***

**A:** Outlined by the society of obstetricians and gynecologists of Canada "There is absolutely no evidence, and no theoretic reason to suspect that the COVID-19 vaccine could impair male or female fertility. These rumors are unfounded and harmful" to read their full statement please click [here](#).

The original concerns online were based on the potential similarity of the spike protein targeted in the vaccines to a protein required for placenta implantation. If infertility were to occur due to immunization and by building an immunity to the spike protein it would also be expected that individuals who have been infected with COVID-19 would show infertility. Real-world data has not shown an increase in infertility for either group.

### ***Q: Is COVID-19 more deadly than the Flu?***

**A:** Stats Canada have released their report for 2020 outlining the number of excess deaths for the calendar year. Based on modeling of the population, it is possible to predict how many deaths would be expected each year. Researchers then look at total reported deaths and can look for inconsistency. The report specifically addresses the COVID-19 Pandemic and can be found [here](#).

### ***Q: Are the COVID-19 vaccines still in Phase 3 trials?***

**A:** Phase 3 trials for the COVID-19 vaccines have been completed. Phase 3 trials included thousands of volunteers who received the COVID-19 vaccines. It is during phase 3 trials that efficacy and safety data was compiled and submitted to Health Canada. Currently the Pfizer and Moderna vaccine trials are continuing to monitor the participants who were in phase 3 to assess long term protection and to continue monitoring for safety. This is a standard practice for new medications, vaccines, and medical tests. Reuters did an excellent fact check on this, it is more United States of America centric but explains the situation well with supporting evidence it can be found [here](#).

## MRNA VACCINES

### ***Q: Which of the available vaccines are mRNA vaccines?***

**A:** The vaccines developed and brought to market by Pfizer and Moderna are both mRNA based vaccines.

### ***Q: How do mRNA vaccines work?***

# Covid-19 Vaccine

## Frequently Asked Questions



**A:** mRNA vaccines work by teaching our cells how to make a protein unique to COVID-19. Our body's immune system then creates memory cells to that protein and when exposed to the COVID-19 virus our immune system is ready to combat the virus more effectively. See Government of Canada resource [here](#).

### ***Q: Are mRNA vaccines safe?***

**A:** mRNA vaccines underwent strict safety monitoring to learn more about the approval process visit the Government of Canada's resources [here](#) and [here](#).

**A:** While mRNA vaccines are newly approved as a method for vaccination, they are not a recent technology. As per the CDC mRNA vaccines are and have been studied for decades to treat several illnesses. See the statement [here](#).

### ***Q: Will the developed mRNA vaccines be effective against new variants of COVID-19?***

**A:** Statements by both Moderna and Pfizer have outlined that they are confident the vaccine will be effective against variants of COVID-19. This is because the protein the vaccines help our bodies build immunity to is the protein the virus uses to enter our cells and cause infection. While the Omicron variant of COVID-19 has mutations on the spike protein, the entire protein has not changed. This decreases the effectiveness of the vaccine at preventing symptomatic infection however someone that is vaccinated will still have antibodies to other areas of the spike protein that have not mutated offer protection against severe outcomes from an infection.

### ***Q: How do I know if it is safe for me to be vaccinated?***

**A:** It is important that anyone who has safety concerns related to their personal health situation speak with their health care team. Members of your healthcare team may include family physician, pharmacist and any specialists involved in your care.

### ***Q: Were stem cells used in the development of the mRNA vaccines?***

**A:** No stem cells were used to develop or create the mRNA vaccines. In testing the COVID-19 vaccines safety and effectiveness a lab cultured stem cell line was utilized. There are no stem cells within the vaccines themselves. A more thorough explanation can be found [here](#).

Current vaccines for rubella, chickenpox, hepatitis A, shingles as well as medications for hemophilia, rheumatoid arthritis and cystic fibrosis utilized these cell lines in similar ways to ensure they were safe for human use.

We recognize that people may have questions and ethical concerns related to the use and source of stem cells in vaccine testing. Given that employees and people who use Christian Horizons' services approach these questions from diverse faiths, denominations, and perspectives, each person is encouraged to learn

## Covid-19 Vaccine

### Frequently Asked Questions



more about the process for themselves or with support and to be aware of any official position related to their own faith or denomination.

## VIRAL VECTOR VACCINES

### ***Q: Which of the available vaccines are viral vector vaccines?***

**A:** The vaccines developed and brought to market by AstraZeneca and Janssen (Johnson and Johnson) are viral vector vaccine.

### ***Q: How do Viral Vector vaccines work?***

**A:** Viral vector vaccines work by using a harmless virus (such as an adenovirus) as a delivery system. This method of using an adenovirus to deliver a protein unique to the COVID-19 virus that your body can mount an immune response to in order to identify and combat the COVID-19 virus when you are exposed to it has been done for vaccine development for decades. See Government of Canada resource [here](#).

### ***Q: Are Viral Vector vaccines safe?***

**A:** Viral vector vaccines underwent strict safety monitoring to learn more about the approval process visit the Government of Canada's resources [here](#) and [here](#).

**A:** Viral Vector vaccines that use adenovirus' as a delivery method have been used in previous vaccines. A notable viral vector vaccine that uses the adenovirus is the Ebola vaccine.

### ***Q: Will the developed Viral Vector vaccines be effective against new variants of COVID-19?***

**A:** Statements by the World Health Organization outlines that the AstraZeneca and Janssen vaccines are approved and should be distributed in regions where COVID-19 variants are circulating. See the entire statement and recommendation from the World Health Organization [here](#).

### ***Q: How do I know if it is safe for me to be vaccinated?***

**A:** It is important that anyone who has safety concerns related to their personal health situation speak with their health care team. Members of your healthcare team may include family physician, pharmacist and any specialists involved in your care.

### ***Q: Why is the vaccine by AstraZeneca not being recommended any longer?***

**A:** The national advisory committee on immunization (NACI) has recommended that AstraZeneca no longer be offered to Canadians. Canada is in the fortunate position to have access to a number of vaccines which

## Covid-19 Vaccine

### Frequently Asked Questions



allows Canada to prioritize the mRNA vaccines for everyone. For more information from NACI about all of the vaccines that have been approved see [here](#).

#### **Q: Were stem cells used in the development of the viral vector vaccines?**

**A:** The AstraZeneca and Janssen vaccines used a stem cell line that has been replicated in a lab for over 50 years and used in the development of many vaccines and other medical treatments. For the AstraZeneca vaccine, the stem cell line was used to grow the adenovirus – a harmless virus that is used in the vaccine. Once grown, the adenovirus is removed from the cells and purified. There are no stem cells in the vaccine itself. A more thorough explanation can be found [here](#).

We recognize that people may have questions and ethical concerns related to the use and source of stem cells in vaccine testing/development. Given that employees and people who use Christian Horizons' services approach these questions from diverse faiths, denominations, and perspectives, each person is encouraged to learn more about the process for themselves or with support and to be aware of any official position related to their own faith or denomination.

## RAPID ANTIGEN SCREENING (RANT)

#### **Q: What is Christian Horizons response to Bill S-201 and the requirement for COVID-19 RANT screening?**

**A:** Bill S-201 or the Genetic Non-Discrimination Act prevents companies and employers from requiring genetic testing or the results of genetic tests. There have been inquires around how this Bill interacts with the requirement for employees to complete rapid antigen testing if they have not shared their vaccination status with Christian Horizons. Notably, genetic testing as defined in the Bill, refers to testing an individual's genes, an example of this would be testing for the genetic markers for Huntington's disease or breast cancer. Rapid testing for COVID-19 is not genetic testing. Rather, it looks for the presence of antigens to COVID-19 which are a by-product of the body's immune response to a new infection not an individual's genetic markers. Polymer chain reaction (PCR) tests do look for genetic material of COVID-19 but, the test does not look at an individual's genes. For more information about Bill S-201 please see the [Canadian Civil Liberties Association overview](#).

#### **Q: I have concerns about the use of Ethylene Oxide in the sterilization of the swabs used for rapid testing. Where can I find more information about this?**

**A:** Ethylene Oxide is used to sterilize medical equipment and food items such as spices and herbs when other sterilization techniques like extreme heat are not a viable solution. There have been a number of investigative reports done about the safety of the nasal swabs including this work from [Reuters](#), and this work from [Health Feedback](#). It is equally important to note that Health Canada approved these sterilization techniques as shown [here](#).

## EDUCATION

## Covid-19 Vaccine

### Frequently Asked Questions



#### **Q: What is Christian Horizons doing to ensure accurate information is available?**

**A:** Several resources continue to be developed around our COVID-19 response, guided by public health and ministry recommendations. On our intranet and internet sites resources specific to COVID-19 and the COVID-19 vaccines have been developed with links to sources.

#### **Q: What are the COVID-19 vaccine webinars Christian Horizons is hosting?**

**A:** Christian Horizons is working with several professionals to answer your questions about the COVID-19 vaccines. These webinars are open to employees, the people who use our services and their families. For more information and to register for any upcoming webinars please click [here](#).

## REGULATIONS

#### **Q: Christian Horizons has special legal duties and responsibilities during the pandemic. What law is that based on?**

**A:** During a public health emergency, the government of Ontario has the power to declare an emergency under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA)*.

Under that EMCPA the government can issue emergency orders by regulation. In 2020, the government used this power to issue a number of emergency orders affecting DS sector agencies such as Christian Horizons. Those orders include:

- **O. Reg. 121/20:** Which permits and requires Developmental Services (DS) agencies to take any measure reasonably necessary with respect to management of staff, prevent, respond to and alleviate the outbreak of COVID-19. This order includes powers and duties to collect information, redeploy, schedule, cancel vacations, institute or end leaves of absence, among other things, even if doing so offends another law or collective agreement.
- **O. Reg. 177/20:** congregate care settings agencies are required to follow the guidance, advice or recommendations of the Ministry of Health or the Chief Medical Officer of Health (“CMOH”) regarding COVID-19 in congregate care settings.
- **O. Reg. 364/20:** DS agencies are required to comply with the instructions of the CMOH and recommendations of local public officers of health.

#### **Q: If we aren't in a state of emergency, do these emergency orders still apply?**

**A:** Yes. The government put in place the *Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act (ROA)* in 2020. Under the ROA, the government has the authority to renew the emergency orders established under the EMCPA every thirty (30) days. The emergency orders above have been continuously renewed every 30

## Covid-19 Vaccine

### Frequently Asked Questions



days since then. These regulations will continue to apply until the government decides they are no longer necessary and chooses not to renew them.

***Q: These orders don't say anything about rapid testing or vaccination policies so how are these related to Christian Horizons' vaccination policy.***

**A:** On August 30, 2021, the Ontario CMOH issued a letter of instruction to all Developmental Services (DS) agencies. You can read the letter of instruction [here](#). This letter requires that DS agencies establish vaccination policies for their employees that require any unvaccinated employees to submit to rapid testing no less than once every seven days. It also requires employees who are not medically exempt to provide proof of having completed educational information sessions related to vaccination.

Christian Horizons is legally obligated under O. Reg. 364/20 and O. Reg. 177/20 to comply with these instructions from the CMOH.

***Q: Is the CMOH's letter of instructions on mandatory vaccination policies legal?***

**A:** Yes. The CMOH is permitted to issue instructions when dealing with public health concerns such as the pandemic. The source of the CMOH's authority to issue such instructions is the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*.

Christian Horizons has a legal duty to comply with the instructions of the CMOH under O. Reg. 177/20 and 364/20.

Christian Horizons also has a legal duty under O. Reg. 121/20 to take any measure reasonably necessary to prevent the outbreak of Covid-19, even if it means not complying with other rules or laws that would typically apply, such as privacy laws, laws related to leaves of absence, discipline or termination of employees.

***Q: Is it appropriate for Christian Horizons to track the vaccination status of employees and people that use our services?***

**A:** In Ontario, Christian Horizons is obligated to comply with the O. Reg. 121/20, which requires every reasonably necessary measure to respond to, prevent, and alleviate a COVID-19 outbreak. For Christian Horizons this includes collecting information from employees about their infection and vaccination status. For people who use the services of Christian Horizons this includes collecting information about their infection and vaccination status plus documenting medical services and medications. We are working very hard to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and all evidence shows that the approved vaccines reduce serious illness and prevents COVID-19.

## Covid-19 Vaccine

### Frequently Asked Questions



In Saskatchewan, Christian Horizons follows the advice of the Office of the Saskatchewan Information and Privacy Commissioner regarding vaccine reporting for organizations and employers.

#### ***Q: Are there any privacy concerns that I should be aware of in reporting my vaccination record with Christian Horizons?***

**A:** Christian Horizons is an employer regulated by the Provinces of Ontario and Saskatchewan governments rather than the Federal Government. Ontario Regulation 121/20 requires Christian Horizons to collect information from employees about their exposure to the virus and any other health conditions that affect the ability of employees to provide supports. In Ontario and Saskatchewan all records and data for vaccination status are stored in keeping with the applicable privacy legislation.

#### ***Q: Is it legal for employers to insist that employees get a vaccination?***

**A:** Christian Horizons is following the advice and direction of Public Health Ontario and the Saskatchewan Health Authority regarding recommendations for vaccination. This advice and direction is included in the COVID-19 Vaccination Policy for Christian Horizons. Christian Horizons is not insisting current employees get vaccinated; however, new hires are required to provide proof of vaccination.

#### ***Q: Are there any non-emergency laws that DS agencies must comply with during the pandemic?***

**A:** Yes. DS agencies have obligations under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)* to take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of a worker. More specifically, one of the regulations under *OSHA* requires residential care agencies to establish and implement measures to vaccinate workers against infectious diseases, such as COVID-19, and to control infections.

In addition, *the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act* requires agencies to have procedures in place to safeguard the health, safety and well-being of persons with developmental disabilities. The well-being of people supported goes beyond mere health and safety and includes social and emotional wellbeing that can be detrimentally impacted by lockdowns and other precautionary measures that must be implemented whenever someone in their home has a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19.

#### ***Q: Is it unconstitutional for Christian Horizons to be asking anyone for their personal medical information, including, but not limited to, whether employees have been vaccinated or not?***

**A:** It is not unconstitutional for Christian Horizons or its employees to ask about an employee's vaccination status; the constitution applies to actions by public or government bodies but not Christian Horizons actions. People, including work colleagues, regularly discuss getting vaccinated and their vaccination status. It is an important topic of conversation among people these days and natural to talk about it. There is nothing wrong with talking about vaccination with your colleagues if you wish. We should all continue to

# Covid-19 Vaccine

## Frequently Asked Questions



politely encourage each other to be vaccinated if we can, for the health and wellbeing of all employees and persons who use our services. However, if a colleague expresses discomfort with the topic or asks not to talk about it, we should honour and respect that request.

### ***Q: Do vaccination and rapid testing requirements violate an employee's human rights?***

**A:** In Ontario and Saskatchewan, employees who have restrictions that are based on human rights protected grounds (like religion or medical conditions) that prohibit them from being vaccinated or participating in rapid testing may have a right to accommodation. However, that only arises where the reason the person can't be tested or vaccinated is a protected reason.

Reasons related to preference, a fear of vaccination, disbelief in the merits of vaccination or testing, a disbelief in COVID-19, or beliefs about the benefits of other types of treatment, are not protected reasons for refusing to rapid test or be vaccinated.

Even where a person refuses vaccination or rapid testing for a protected reason, they will have to provide proof to establish that their reasons are legitimately related to the protected ground. In addition, even if the reasons are proven to be based in a protected ground there are limits on the duty to accommodate. Specifically, accommodation does not have to be provided if a person couldn't perform the requirements of their job (or modified work) even with accommodation, for example, where the employee's job requires that they attend a person supported at locations in the community where proof of vaccination is required.

In addition, an employer does not have to provide accommodation where it would cause undue health and safety risks or undue financial hardship.

Each request for accommodation must be considered on a case-by-case basis.

### ***Q: What does the Human Rights Commission say about vaccination policies?***

On September 22, 2021, the Ontario Human Rights Commission released its statement on COVID-19 vaccine mandates and proof of vaccine certificates. This statement affirms that vaccination mandates are generally permissible consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code. You can read the policy statement here: [http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/news\\_centre/ohrc-policy-statement-covid-19-vaccine-mandates-and-proof-vaccine-certificates](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/news_centre/ohrc-policy-statement-covid-19-vaccine-mandates-and-proof-vaccine-certificates)

Similarly, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission has released an Information Sheet on COVID-19 vaccines, vaccination mandates and human rights and indicated that vaccination mandates are generally permissible. You can read the policy statement here: <https://saskatchewanhumanrights.ca/education-resources/information-sheets/covid-19-vaccines-vaccination-mandates-and-human-rights/>

## **Covid-19 Vaccine**

### *Frequently Asked Questions*

Both of these statements affirm that any human rights related restrictions on vaccination policies would be limited to clearly listed “protected grounds” and that singular or personal beliefs unrelated to a protected ground are not a protected reason for refusing vaccination or rapid testing.

#### ***Q: What about the Canadian Human Rights Commission?***

The Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) only has jurisdiction over federally regulated employers (such as Canada Post, the federal government, Air Canada etc.). The CHRC does not have jurisdiction over Christian Horizons or the government of Ontario.