

**Date:** April 20, 2021

**Memorandum to:** Medical Officers of Health  
Hospital CEOs

**From:** Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health Ontario  
Dr. Dirk Huyer, Lead, Clinical Guidance and Surveillance  
Workstream Vaccine Distribution Task Force

**Subject: AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD COVID-19 Vaccine Update**

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This memo is to inform you of an important update to Ontario's COVID-19 vaccination program to ensure Ontarians receive a first dose of protection as quickly as possible to further strengthen our fight against COVID-19.

### **Administration of AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD COVID-19 Vaccine**

Starting Tuesday, April 20, Ontario will offer the AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD vaccine to all healthy Ontarians aged 40 years and over. This approach will help to maximize the number of people protected in the shortest possible time, thereby reducing illness, hospitalization and death as well as reducing transmission of the virus.

Currently, Ontario's COVID-19 cases and rates are the highest in this third wave than at any other time over the course of the pandemic. Experts agree that it is imperative for Ontarians to be vaccinated as quickly as possible. The AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD vaccine is very effective at protecting against serious illness, hospitalization and death ([COVID-19 Vaccine Information Sheet](#)). This is particularly important as we continue to see a significant number of hospital admissions and cases that require critical care.

We have reviewed the evidence from Health Canada, the United Kingdom and Europe and believe that this is the right and safe approach. We have a robust process in Ontario to monitor for adverse effects and have taken steps to raise awareness among health system partners to ensure that if a rare event happens, we can act quickly to identify and treat. Patients who are not sure if this vaccine is right for them because of their personal medical history should speak with their health care provider.

To ensure that individuals can access the AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD vaccine as quickly as possible, Ontario will implement the following on Tuesday, April 20, 2021:

- Pharmacies, primary care practices and any public health unit-led clinics using these vaccines will offer AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD to those 40 years and over;
- Pharmacies can choose to offer walk-in appointments *in addition to* pre-booked appointments; and
- Pharmacies in hot spot communities will receive *additional doses* of AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD to replenish their stock as doses are used, as supply allows, to provide vaccine to those at greater risk

As committed last week, hot spot communities will also continue to receive additional doses of vaccine as new shipments are available.

We will continue to keep you apprised of changes to Ontario's COVID-19 situation and appreciate your ongoing partnership and dedication to this critical work.

Sincerely,

*(originally signed by)*

*(originally signed by)*

(Original signed by)

Dr. David Williams

Dr. Dirk Huyer

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Dr. Homer Tien, Chair, Vaccine Distribution Task Force  
Helen Angus, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health  
Mario Di Tommaso, Deputy Minister, Ministry of the Solicitor General  
Patrick Dicerni, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health  
Ken Chan, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of the Solicitor General  
Alison Blair, Associate Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health