Talking to staff about COVID-19 vaccination: Q&A for managers

We know that many care staff, especially frontline workers, have questions and anxieties about COVID-19 vaccination. SafeCareBC recommends that managers talk openly and often about vaccination and provide a safe environment for staff to ask questions and share concerns, so when workers are offered a vaccine, they are comfortable and feel they are making an informed decision.

We've developed a Q&A that will help you answer some of the most common questions that your staff may have.

Is the vaccine safe?

The vaccine has been held to the same safety standards as any other vaccine or medicine authorized by Health Canada. Health Canada reviewed all of the scientific and medical evidence and did not identify any major safety concerns. As with all medicines, some side effects can occur, but serious side effects are very rare.
The risk of death or long-term health impacts is far greater from contracting COVID-19 than it is from the vaccine.

What are the possible side effects? Does it affect my DNA?

Mild side effects may occur 24-48 hours after receiving the vaccine. These are similar to the side effects for the flu vaccine, such as mild arm pain where the shot was administered, feeling tired or feverish, or body chills. These side effects are an indication that the vaccine is working by preparing your body to fight the disease.

In some rare cases, allergic reactions have been reported. You should not take the vaccine if you are allergic to any of the ingredients. mRNA vaccines, such as the Pfizer-BioNTECH and Moderna vaccines cannot affect your DNA.

Vaccination nurses are trained to treat those who may experience an allergic reaction

I usually support vaccination, but this one was developed quickly. Should I wait until it's been tested further?
This vaccine was actually tested **more widely** than many vaccines for other diseases. It was also held to the same safety standards. Scientists were able to develop it quickly, because a lot of the groundwork had already been done in response to the SARS and MERS outbreaks, where the viruses were similar.

It also usually takes a long time—sometimes years—to secure funding and to recruit participants for trials. However, with COVID, the whole world was committed to supporting vaccine development to end the pandemic. This means researchers had lots of resources available to them.

Governments also 'pre-purchased' doses anticipating some of the vaccines would work. This meant that pharmaceutical companies had the funding to start manufacturing the vaccine much earlier, so there was no delay after the vaccine was approved.

Should I get vaccinated if I'm pregnant or breastfeeding? What about impacts on fertility?
The trials for the COVID-19 vaccines did not include pregnant or breastfeeding people**.** This means that we do not have enough information to be sure of the effects on pregnant people, foetuses or newborn babies. However, this does not necessarily mean it is unsafe. Those who are pregnant or breastfeeding are recommended to discuss with their healthcare provider and make an informed decision, weighing the risks against the risks of contracting COVID-19.

There is no scientific evidence to suggest that the vaccine has, or would be likely to have, any impact on fertility.

Will the Government be transparent about negative side effects if they are discovered during the rollout?

The vaccine manufacturers and public health authorities across the world are continuing to monitor for any potentially serious side effects from COVID-19 vaccination. Health Canada legally requires the manufacturer to report any adverse effects.

Even though the vaccines have been authorized for use, Health Canada will continue to monitor all of the data and evidence and has the power require extra safety measures, if needed, to protect the health and safety of Canadians.

If you or your staff have additional questions about COVID vaccination, you can email us at info@safecarebc.ca

You can access more resources at www.safecarebc.ca/vaccination