

ISC-AB Weekly Vaccine Update – February 9, 2021

General Updates

- While case numbers are going down, Alberta First Nations continue to report new active cases on-reserve. As of February 8, 2021, there are a total of 5456 confirmed cases on-reserve, of which 590 are active in 39 First Nations communities. 4812 cases have recovered, 40 individuals are in hospital (17 in the intensive care unit) and 54 individuals have passed away.
- Case numbers are dropping in First Nations which is a positive sign but it remains important to follow public health measures. The new COVID-19 variants are a concern and, as many First Nations members travel between provinces and travel to and from cities, there is a chance we may see the variants spread to First Nations communities. It will be important to continue to practice public health measures as the variants spread more rapidly and present a risk for higher household transmission.

Vaccine General Update

- The Moderna vaccine is being rolled out to First Nations communities this week. Please use all the doses received for first doses, as second doses will be arriving in communities in mid-March.
- There may not be 100% uptake of the COVID-19 vaccine among the over 65 population, so plan for other individuals who may need the vaccine, maybe people with pre-existing conditions, those in congregate care or your health care teams.
- We know about 1200 doses have been administered in First Nations communities in Alberta to date, approximately half of these doses given to health care workers. We expect to see coverage in the over 65 group increase over the next week – please enter data into CHIP as soon as possible as it helps us keep track. This data is very important as it helps us in identifying uptake and levels of vaccine hesitancy in communities. In turn, the data also helps us plan the next stages.
- This is a first trial to see how the vaccine rollout will proceed in these unique circumstances and we can make adjustments as needed for moving forward. It will be a great opportunity to learn much more about adverse events, vaccine hesitancy and some of the challenges we may experience as members begin getting vaccinated.
- ISC-AB is still waiting to learn more about Phase 2 planning. Expecting to hear more from our provincial partners over the coming weeks. This planning will help inform the next stage of vaccine planning in April, as Canada will begin receiving 1 million doses of vaccine per week.
- AstraZeneca is getting closer to approvals, Novavax and Johnson and Johnson data is being reviewed by Health Canada. No other vaccines approved at the moment, but the Pfizer vaccine has been approved for 6 doses per vial by Health Canada.

Vaccine ordering

- Every community should have received, or should be expecting their order of vaccines from their vaccine depot. If you have not been in contact with your vaccine depot you should contact them immediately.
- Please do not order any more vaccines in AVI. There will be no further vaccines available beyond the over 65 population on reserve, and second doses will also be a set number which will be entered into the system automatically.
- If any changes are needed to delivery date or pickup time, contact your vaccine depot.
- When you begin administering vaccines, please enter data as soon as possible in CHIP/AVI. Alberta Health has requested updates by 9pm each day.

- Documents to help in your vaccine clinics have been sent to you via email and are available on OneHealth. The Anaphylaxis document was sent out last week. Keep a copy with your EPI kit, as it helps to follow this document step by step.
- The prefilled syringe policy was also sent out last week. This policy is important as it is designed to reduce wastage of vaccine doses. In a setting where a full vial is not required and doses would be wasted; the immunizer may pre-fill syringes with COVID-19 vaccine and transport them appropriately, including getting doses to people who may not be able to leave home. Pre-filled syringes must be used within 6 hours of the vaccine vial being punctured. This is not recommended as routine practice, only in specific cases.
- Combining vaccines – some Moderna vials are producing 11 doses. If you get an extra dose from one vial you can use this, these cannot be combined with a little extra from other vial.
- If there is no family physician and people want follow up after receiving their dose, they may have a specialist if they have a specific pre-existing condition who can provide some follow-up support.
- There have been updates to AHS consent sheets, public health measures and requirements. ISC-AB will continue to send out links to documents, but always go to AHS website for most up to date information. Onehealth is also being updated with recent documents.

Data Entry

- A new document on data entry tips from OKAKI/CHIP is available on One Health and gives good guidelines on how to enter data (COVID-19 Vaccine/Data Reporting/CHIP Data Entry Hints 2021). The guide helps clarify the basic data entry requirements that, if entered properly the first time, will avoid having to return and clean up the data later.
- As rollout continues, data on “no-shows and “refusals” will be important. Please keep a record of how many “no-shows” and “refusals” occur with each clinic. ISC-AB is working on a process by which we can gather this data.
- Also please report all adverse events regardless whether the event meets the formal definition of an AEFI or not. Please submit using the standard AEFI form found on One Health (Community Health/Communicable Disease Control Program/Immunization/Adverse Events Following Immunization/Alberta Health Adverse Event Following Immunization Form). If you don't know which number to choose Select 32-Other Unusual Events and then detail the reaction under Descriptions of Events

Questions

- **Is there data about getting COVID-19 a second time with these new variants? Is the vaccine effective against the new variants so far? What are the Alberta locations of the new variants?**
 - There is not a lot of data so far on getting COVID-19 again with a new variant, but even those who have had COVID-19 should still follow public health measures such as physical distancing and masking. Information on the effectiveness of vaccines against new variants has shown that existing vaccines do work. Pfizer and Moderna will both monitor changes and developments should vaccines need to be altered. The new variants are primarily in central and south Alberta.

- **Should we try to get the extra dose out of each vial of Moderna vaccine or just use the 10 doses?**
 - Getting 11 doses is a bonus but your first priority should be making sure each of the 10 doses given is a full dose. At this point, each community should have the right amount of vaccine for over 65 and it is not necessary to stretch these vials further. 1cc syringes are also in short supply and help maximize doses, so using 3cc syringes may make getting 11 doses more difficult.
- **Are we seeing many larger immune responses with the second doses now?**
 - Delayed reactions to the first dose have been reported, but we do know the second dose causes a more intense reaction, but nothing too severe.
- **Where can I get a copy of the anaphylaxis document and pre-filled syringe policy?**
 - If you did not receive the email with these documents, please contact ISC-AB and we can send them to you. These documents are also available on Onehealth.
- **How long after a live vaccination is given, can the Moderna vaccine or Pfizer be given? Is it two weeks as well?**
 - Yes, other vaccines can be given 14 days before the COVID-19 vaccine or 30 days after. It is also recommended to not get any other vaccinations between the first and second dose of COVID-19 vaccines. Ideally, no other vaccines should be given between doses, but should there be an urgent situation you can contact the ISC-AB CDC team to discuss options.
- **Is the Moderna vaccine safe to give to diabetics both Type 1 and Type 2?**
 - Yes it is safe for diabetics and we encourage anyone with diabetes to be prioritized for vaccination when possible as these people are at greater risk of severe outcomes with COVID-19.
- Adverse stats in data – link to the website <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/covid-19/vaccine-safety/>

Thank you all for your continued participation and patience. Due to the rollout of vaccines in communities and the demands on everyone's schedules, we will postpone this meeting for the next 2 weeks. In the interim, we will provide email updates and please contact ISC-AB should any further questions arise.