



Health

Public Health  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor; 300 Carlton Street Winnipeg MB R3B 3M9  
[vaccines@gov.mb.ca](mailto:vaccines@gov.mb.ca)

October 4, 2023

**Re: Recommendation for the use of the updated XBB.1.5 formulation for fall 2023 and returning unused COVID-19 vaccines**

Dear Health Care Provider:

**Updated XBB.1.5 formulations of COVID-19 vaccines for Moderna and Pfizer were approved by Health Canada in September 2023.**

- The XBB.1.5 formulation will provide better protection against currently circulating strains of COVID-19 compared to the previous COVID-19 vaccine formulation.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) Technical Advisory Group on COVID-19 Vaccine Composition (TAG-CO-VAC) noted that as of May 2023, the XBB.1 descendent lineages currently predominate globally (i.e., XBB.1.5, XBB.1.16, XBB.1.9).
- XBB descendent lineages, including XBB.1.5 and XBB.1.16, are highly immune evasive, with XBB.1.5 being one of the COVID-19 variants with the greatest magnitude of immune escape from neutralizing antibodies to date.

**Accordingly, Manitoba's 2023-24 Fall COVID-19 and Flu Immunization Program will use the updated XBB.1.5 formulations of the COVID-19 vaccines.**

- This is based on the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommendation that all individuals aged 6 months and older receive a dose of the updated formulation.
- Both brands of COVID-19 mRNA vaccine (Moderna and Pfizer) are effective for preventing severe disease from COVID-19.
- Current data do not show a product-specific difference in the risks of myocarditis and/or pericarditis after a dose of an updated formulation of mRNA COVID-19 vaccine.

If a client requests a non-mRNA vaccine, please advise them that the updated XBB.1.5 Novavax formulation has not yet received Health Canada approval. Manitoba Health is anticipating Novavax approval will occur in late 2023. The risks and benefits of waiting to receive a non-mRNA vaccine should be discussed with each client. At this time, Manitoba Health does not have any non-mRNA vaccine available.

## **Returning Previous Formulations of COVID-19 Vaccines**

Please check your inventory for any previous formulations of COVID-19 vaccine stock that may be on hand and return them to the provincial distribution warehouse (MDA) as soon as possible. Complete the Vaccine and Biologics Return Form found at: [www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/div/docs/vbrpp.pdf](http://www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/div/docs/vbrpp.pdf) and include it in the return package as per the instructions. Given that all returned doses will be processed for disposal, routine cold-chain monitoring will not be necessary.

## **Provincial COVID-19 Resources**

Provincial resources are being updated to reflect the recommendation of the XBB.1.5 vaccine formulation and are being posted online as they become available. Resources for Health Care Providers can be found at: [www.manitoba.ca/covid19/health-care-providers.html](http://www.manitoba.ca/covid19/health-care-providers.html)

Updated provincial factsheets are available at: [www.manitoba.ca/covid19/public-resources.html#factsheets](http://www.manitoba.ca/covid19/public-resources.html#factsheets).

Please share this information with all relevant colleagues in your facility/clinic.

Sincerely,

*“Original Signed By”*

Inga Hossack, BSc  
Acting Director  
Communicable Disease Control

*“Original Signed By”*

Natalie Casclang, MD, CCFP, FRCPC  
Medical Officer of Health,  
Population and Public Health