

March 30, 2021 (rev.)

Dear Doctor,

All COVID-19 vaccines approved by Health Canada for use in Canada, including the AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD vaccine are considered to be very safe products. A normal part of any new vaccine rollout is careful monitoring of serious side effects or adverse events that may be associated with its use.

In recent weeks there have been reports regarding a very rare type of blood clot that may or may not be associated with the AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD vaccine in persons under 55 years old. Health Canada and the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) are reviewing both reported adverse events and available evidence to determine if a change to our current COVID-19 vaccine recommendations is required.

- Out of an abundance of caution the province of BC and NH are pausing the rollout of AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD to all persons under 55 years old per the [NACI rapid response: Recommended use of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine in younger adults](#).
- Adults 55 and older may be offered these vaccines, given the [increased risk of hospitalization and death due to COVID-19](#) in this population and since VIPIT reports have been even rarer in that age group.
 - Several European countries have reported rare cases of blood clots associated with a syndrome named “Vaccine-Induced Prothrombotic Immune Thrombocytopenia” (VIPIT) in patients who had received the COVISHIELD/AstraZeneca vaccine
- Health Canada has updated Section 7 Warnings and Precautions of both [product monographs](#) with information about these events.
- The Ontario Science Table COVID-19 Advisory has issued [diagnostic and treatment guidelines](#), and these are applicable should any suspect cases be identified in BC. Treatment recommendations include **no** heparin, **no** platelet transfusions, and use of direct oral anti-Xa inhibitors for anticoagulation (e.g., rivaroxaban, apixaban, edoxaban) as well as intravenous immunoglobulin, all under the guidance of a hematologist.

Individuals receiving this vaccine should be reassured that these adverse events are very rare, and that the risk of complication from COVID-19 infection can be just as serious. For patients who have already received their first dose of the AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD vaccine, there is no reason for concern at this time. As with all vaccines, it is recommended that you monitor for side effects in the days and weeks following your vaccination and report them to your health care professional.

Given the most recent safety signal, anyone experiencing the following signs and symptoms four to 20 days after receiving COVISHIELD or AstraZeneca vaccine should seek medical attention

promptly and inform the clinician about their vaccine receipt:

- prolonged headache beginning 4 or more days after vaccination
- blurred vision
- difficulty speaking
- a seizure
- difficulty moving parts of the body
- shortness of breath
- chest pain
- new severe swelling, pain or colour change of an arm or a leg
- persistent abdominal pain
- abnormal bruising, reddish or purple spots or blood blisters under the skin
- bleeding beyond site of vaccination.

In addition to timely diagnosis and management, clinicians who identify vaccine recipients with VIPIT should report such cases to the [adverse events following immunization system](#) in BC.

We will continue to provide our physician partners with updates as more information becomes available.

Sincerely,



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Northern Health