AstraZeneca Vaxzevria COVID-19 Vaccine Update from York Region Public Health to Health Care Providers

January 12, 2022

Dear York Region Health Care Provider,

York Region Public Health has limited supply of the AstraZeneca Vaxzevria COVID-19 vaccine available for clients

If you have a patient (aged 18 years and older) who would like to receive the AstraZeneca Vaxzevria COVID-19 vaccine, please direct them to call Access York at 1-877-464-9675 to be added to a waitlist of individuals. Planning is underway for a dedicated AstraZeneca Vaxzevria COVID-19 clinic, and these clients who are added to the waitlist will be notified with further details about the clinic.

Please review the following information, as well as the Ministry of Health COVID-19 Vaccine Information for Individuals who received a first dose of the AstraZeneca Vaxzevria/COVISHIELD COVID-19 vaccine and the latest COVID-19 Vaccine Third Dose Recommendations, with patients interested in receiving the AstraZeneca Vaxzevria vaccine.

Every effort should be made to immunize with an mRNA vaccine and the AstraZeneca Vaxzevria vaccine should only be used when an mRNA vaccine is contraindicated and after informed consent

Ontario recommends that a booster dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine should be given at least three months after the second dose of AstraZeneca Vaxzevria COVID-19 vaccine. In general, vaccine effectiveness against symptomatic SARS-CoV-2 infection and severe COVID-19 outcomes has consistently been lower for individuals receiving viral vector vaccines (like AstraZeneca Vaxzevria) compared to mRNA vaccines. Because of lower protection and some safety concerns, mRNA vaccines are recommended by National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI). Individuals who have had a severe, immediate (i.e., less than four hours after vaccination) allergic reaction or anaphylaxis to a previous dose of a COVID-19 vaccine or to any of its components or its container should **seek assessment by an appropriate physician or nurse practitioner as vaccination with an mRNA vaccine can be safely performed in these individuals** under supervision of an appropriate physician.

Who can and cannot receive the AstraZeneca Vaxzevria COVID-19 vaccine at this time?

- The AstraZeneca Vaxzevria COVID-19 vaccine is authorized for use in people who are 18 years of age and older
- The AstraZeneca Vaxzevria COVID-19 vaccine should not be used in individuals younger than 18

- The AstraZeneca Vaxzevria COVID-19 vaccine is currently not available to be used as the first dose of a COVID-19 vaccination series in Ontario
- AstraZeneca Vaxzevria COVID-19 vaccine is currently only available, with informed consent, to individuals with contraindications (i.e., severe allergic reaction including anaphylaxis) to mRNA vaccines as identified by an allergist/immunologist or specialist.
- Individuals that received AstraZeneca Vaxzevria COVID-19 vaccine for their first and/or second dose are recommended to receive an mRNA vaccine for their third or booster dose. Individuals that choose to receive an AstraZeneca Vaxzevria COVID-19 vaccine must have documented contraindications as identified by an allergist/immunologist or specialist.

Individuals with the following conditions should not receive the AstraZeneca Vaxzevria COVID-19 vaccine:

- A history of blood clots with low platelets (i.e., major venous and/or arterial thrombosis with thrombocytopenia) following vaccination with any vaccine
    - If patient had blood clots with low platelets after a previous viral vector vaccine (AstraZeneca Vaxzevria or Janssen), patient should not receive the AstraZeneca Vaxzevria COVID-19 vaccine
- Thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS), including Vaccine-Induced Thrombotic Thrombocytopenia (VITT) following the AstraZeneca Vaxzevria COVID-19 vaccine
- A history of capillary leak syndrome (CLS)
- A history of cerebral venous sinus thrombosis (CVST) with thrombocytopenia
- A history of heparin-induced thrombocytopenia (HIT)
- Actively receiving monoclonal antibody therapy OR convalescent plasma therapy for the treatment or prevention of COVID-19

Individuals experiencing the following should discuss their vaccine choices with a heath care provider before receiving the AstraZeneca Vaxzevria COVID-19 vaccine

- Individuals with severe allergic reaction (including anaphylaxis) to a component/ingredient of the AstraZeneca Vaxzevria vaccine
- Individuals who have experienced serious adverse event following COVID-19 immunization

Some very rare reactions that have been found to occur from taking a viral vector vaccine are:

- Thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TSS), including Vaccine-Induced Thrombotic Thrombocytopenia (VITT)
    - TSS is a serious condition involving thrombosis (blood clots) and thrombocytopenia (low platelets; platelets are a part of the blood used for clotting). TSS can cause blood clots to develop in the brain, abdomen, legs and other parts of the body. TSS symptoms usually occurs between 4 to 28 days after receipt of a viral vector COVID-19 vaccines, and sometimes up to 6 weeks, after vaccination.
    - The rate of TSS after the first dose of AstraZeneca Vaxzevria COVID-19 vaccine is estimated between 1 per 26,000 and 1 per 100,000 persons. The frequency of TSS following second dose of AstraZeneca Vaxzevira is estimated to be 1 per 520,000 persons. Fatality rate for TSS is estimated to be between 20% to 50% with many cases reported to have serious long-term morbidity, including brain injury.
    - Because of the risk of TSS, mRNA vaccines are preferred

- Capillary leak syndrome (CLS)
  - Capillary leak syndrome is a serious and sometimes fatal condition that causes fluid to leak from small blood vessels causing rapid swelling of the arms and legs, sudden weight gain, and low blood pressures resulting in feeling faint
  - Those who have previously had capillary leak syndrome appear to be at increased risk following vaccination with a viral vector vaccine, such as AstraZeneca Vaxzevria
- Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS)
  - GBS is a potentially serious neurologic disorder that results in numbness and weakness predominantly in the limbs, face, or chest, causing paralysis in severe cases. Symptoms generally occur within the first 25 days after vaccination with the AstraZeneca Vaxzevria vaccine.
  - Most people fully recover from GBS but some have remaining symptoms and rarely, fatal cases can occur
- Immune thrombocytopenia (ITP)
  - ITP results in low platelets (a part of the blood used for clotting) that can cause easy or excessive bruising or bleeding. It can occur within 4 weeks of vaccination and cases can be fatal.
  - Some of the cases of ITP after vaccination have occurred in people with a history of ITP

Please speak to your patients who would like to receive the AstraZeneca Vaxzevria COVID-19 vaccine about the risks and benefits. If after informed consent they wish to receive the AstraZeneca Vaxzevria COVID-19 vaccine, please direct them to call Access York at 1-877-464-9675 for more information on how to access the AstraZeneca Vaxzevria COVID-19 vaccine in York Region.

Reporting Adverse Events

If a patient experiences a side effect following immunization, please complete the Adverse Events Following Immunization (AEFI) Form and send it to York Region Public Health via fax at 905-898-5213, or call our Nurses Line at 1-877-464-9675, ext. 73452.

Contact York Region Public Health

For more information, call our dedicated health care professional line at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 77280 (8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday) or visit york.ca/healthprofessionals