



COVID-19 Vaccination Guidance for the ALS Community

February 2, 2021

As a member of the ALS community, what should you know about the COVID-19 vaccine?

Is the vaccine safe?

- Both the Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines provide protection in the event of COVID-19 exposure.
- The known side effects of the approved COVID-19 vaccines are similar to those of the annual flu vaccine. These include muscle soreness at the injection site, tiredness, fever, body aches, and headache.
- There is currently no data regarding the safety or efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines in the ALS population, but it is our current opinion that the benefits of vaccination by protecting against COVID-19 infection likely outweigh the potential risks and side effects.
- Individuals with known history of a severe allergic reaction to any component of the COVID-19 vaccine should not receive the vaccine.

Should people living with ALS be considered a vulnerable population?

- The National Advisory Council on Immunization (NACI) recommends that those who are at high risk of more severe disease or outcomes should be considered a key population to receive early doses of COVID-19 vaccines. It is our professional opinion that people living with ALS should be included in this category.
- ALS patients are assumed to be at higher risk for more severe outcomes from COVID-19 due to the progressive weakness of respiratory or bulbar muscles, which results in breathing difficulties, impaired cough reflex and ineffective airway clearance.

Should I receive the vaccine?

- People living with ALS and their caregivers are encouraged to receive the COVID-19 vaccine when it is available, in consultation with their health care provider.
- We do not anticipate that COVID-19 vaccines will have different or more serious side effects for ALS patients, but this has not been proven in a clinical trial.

When and where can I get the vaccine?

- Vulnerable groups with pre-existing conditions like those living with ALS deserve early protection.
- Although guidance on who will receive the COVID-19 vaccine at each stage of the rollout is determined at the provincial level, we are working alongside the ALS Societies across the country to advocate that Canadians living with ALS be prioritized for vaccinations.
- Recognizing that ALS patients face added mobility and accessibility challenges, and may be homebound, ALS experts support giving the vaccine in the home wherever possible.

General Resources

- [Vaccines and treatments for COVID-19: Vaccine rollout](#) (Health Canada)
- [Covid-19 Vaccine — Frequently Asked Questions](#) (New England Journal of Medicine)
- [Doctor – Should I get the COVID-19 vaccine? Infection and Immunization in Individuals with Neuromuscular Disorders](#) (Muscle & Nerve)

Note and Disclaimer: This guidance was created by ALS clinical experts across the country. This document is based on the best available evidence at the time of release. We can't guarantee that the guidance is up to date or current as the pandemic is changing daily.