



NEWS

Here's what the Pfizer vaccine shortage means for Ontario

Zero Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines being allocated this week: province

By [Veronica Appia](#) Toronto.com

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The Ontario government has announced new plans for vaccine allocation, as a result of the current delivery shortage of Pfizer-BioNTech doses across the country.

This week, Ontario will not be receiving any Pfizer vaccines, the government announced in a brief on Jan. 25. This is due to Pfizer's recent decision to scale up its plant in Belgium, resulting in [temporary delivery reductions](#) in Canada and Europe.

As well, the week of Feb. 1, Ontario is expecting just over 26,000 doses — a

significant reduction from the usual weekly allocation number of around 80,000. Provincial allocations for the following weeks of Feb. 8 and 15 are not yet known.

Here's how the province plans to address the supply shortage:

Vaccinating high-risk residents

As a result of the shortages, the province plans to prioritize vaccination of the most high-risk populations, which will include long-term care, high-risk retirement, and First Nations elder care residents.

First doses are expected to be administered to all above-mentioned residents across the province by Feb. 5, pending Pfizer deliveries during the first week of February.

Second dose timelines

As per new recommendations by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI), second doses for COVID-19 mRNA vaccines can now be administered a maximum of 42 days after the first dose, in certain circumstances.

The usual recommended timeline for the Pfizer booster is 19 to 28 days after the first dose.

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The Ontario government said it will be maintaining its current interval of 21 to 27 days for high-risk resident groups, but will consider the 42-day maximum for other groups currently awaiting their second doses in Phase 1.

Due to the fact that Moderna vaccine shipments remain on schedule, those receiving second doses of Moderna will continue to receive them at the recommended 28-day interval.

Delays

Due to the province's new prioritization plan for vulnerable residents, some vaccination appointments may be moved to a later date as the province awaits further vaccine supply.

Once the Pfizer supply is restored, the province will resume vaccinating the following groups as part of Phase 1:

- Staff and essential caregivers in long-term care, high-risk retirement and First Nations elder care homes
- Retirement homes and other congregate care for seniors
- Health care workers
- Indigenous populations
- Adults in chronic home care

"Due to the delay in the next shipment of Pfizer vaccine doses, we are ensuring all available supplies are redirected to those who need them most: our residents in long-term care and retirement homes," Premier Doug Ford said.

"I know this will mean that some people may have to reschedule their vaccine appointments, but it is critical that our most vulnerable seniors receive the protection they need as soon as possible."

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Veronica Appia is a reporter with *Torstar Corporation Community Brands*, covering COVID-19 news across Ontario.

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