

COVID-19 Vaccines: Expected Side Effects vs. Adverse Events

Common & expected side effects from COVID-19 vaccines:

Most side effects caused by Moderna and Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccines are minor and short lived. These side effects **are normal and are expected**. They may be more likely to occur after the second dose.

These may include:

- redness and swelling at the injection site
- tiredness
- headache
- muscle pain
- joint pain
- chills
- mild fever
- swollen glands (less frequently)

Tips that may help to ease common side effects:

Some people find that putting a **cold compress** on the injection site or taking **acetaminophen or ibuprofen** can be helpful with side effects.

What are **adverse reactions** and how do you report them?

Severe reactions are **uncommon**. If you need medical assistance, please seek medical attention. Call 911 if you need assistance immediately.

Signs of serious allergic reactions may include:

- difficulty breathing
- swelling of face, throat or tongue
- hives (bumps on the skin that are itchy)

If these occur, **a doctor should report them to Hamilton Public Health**.

Other uncommon adverse reactions that need a doctor to report them to Hamilton Public Health include:

- rash
- swelling of arm that spreads to the next joint (elbow) or lasts 4 days or more
- pain that lasts 4 days or more
- fainting that causes injury
- swelling of the face or mouth
- very pale colour and serious drowsiness
- high fever (over 40°C)
- convulsions or seizures
- other serious symptoms (e.g., “pins and needles” or numbness lasting for over 24 hours).

IMPORTANT: Discuss **uncommon reactions with your family doctor**. If you don't have a family doctor, a walk-in clinic might be preferred. A doctor can diagnose these uncommon reactions and **report them to the local health unit**. If you do not have access to a doctor, please call the Vaccine Program at Public health at **905-546-2424 ext 7556** to report symptoms. If you need a family doctor, please consider <https://needadoc.ca>.