



You've been really patient, followed social distancing rules and we know how challenging that's been.

You deserve...a shot in the arm! Yes, it's now time, you are very close to getting the COVID-19 vaccine. To help, the Dementia Society has put together some tips to help you prepare for and book your shot, and get yourself and the person living with dementia ready for this very special outing.

We know older adults and people living with dementia are more vulnerable to COVID-19. Vaccination is one of the most effective ways to protect yourself against COVID-19, and to reduce its impact in our community, and prevent further spread.

Step 1: A little pre-vaccination administration

Who, where and when you can get the vaccine is evolving as the most vulnerable among us are vaccinated, and as the supply of vaccines allow. Here are some tips to help you prepare.

- Before booking your shot, it's a good idea to **check with your** (person living with dementia's) **family doctor** to be sure there are no concerns about getting a vaccine. Sometimes medication or certain conditions may mean this is not the right thing for you at this time.
 - To save time, **do this now**, even if you are not yet eligible to book a vaccine appointment.
- Once you are certain there are no other health risks preventing you from getting the vaccine, you can **determine** if you and/or your person living with dementia is **eligible to receive it**. To do this, consult:

- Ottawa Public Health's eligibility screening tool:

<https://secureforms.ottawapublichealth.ca/vaccines/COVID-19-Vaccine-Screening-Tool/>;

Note: If you are eligible, you will be directed to either the provincial booking site (Web or phone) or you will be asked to call Ottawa Public Health directly if you qualify for one of the smaller pop-up clinics (see step 2 for more information). or

- Renfrew County and District Health Unit: <https://www.rcdhu.com/healthy-living/immunization/>

If you are eligible – great news! If not, check back frequently, things change daily. We know you can continue to be patient just a little longer...

If you are unsure about anything, don't hesitate to contact the Dementia Society—we're here to help.

Explaining the COVID-19 vaccination to someone living with dementia

- The vaccination is not compulsory, but it is highly recommended.
- The vaccine will help reduce the spread of the virus and our risk of becoming seriously ill.
- The vaccine is a little different from the flu vaccine: we may need 2 doses for it to be effective.

Step 2: Booking your vaccination appointment

- **In Ottawa, when you are eligible**, you can schedule your vaccination appointment through the online provincial booking system: <http://www.ontario.ca/bookvaccine> or by phone 1-888-999-6488.
 - Based on specific criteria, some **residents may qualify for appointments at smaller pop-up clinics**. This may be helpful to minimize the impact of noise and confusion for the person living with dementia. **If you have been contacted or learned otherwise that you are eligible** for these, contact Ottawa Public Health directly at 613-691-5505. We suggest you clearly state that you are calling because you qualify to book at a local pop-up clinic.
- **For booking information in Renfrew County**, visit the Renfrew County and District Health Unit website (<https://www.rcdhu.com/>) or call 613-735-9724 or 1-800-267-1097 ext. 200.
 - Note: At the time of publication, the provincial booking system was not yet in use in Renfrew County and district. Website users are being redirected to the local system.
- **Transportation to clinics in Ottawa:**
 - **Current Para Transpo users**, contact 613-842-3600
 - **Others may book transport** via the Ottawa Community Transportation (<https://communitysupport.covidresponse.ca/transportationvaccination>) or by calling 211
- **Transportation to clinics in Renfrew County:**
 - Champlain Community Support Network (<https://www.caredove.com/champlaincss> - Click on "Rides and transportation")
- If possible, **schedule the appointment at a time that works with your current schedule**. For example, if you can, don't book during meal, nap or sun-downing times.
- When booking the appointment, **ask your public health unit about the consent form**. Filling this out in advance can minimize questions onsite, and simplify communication.
 - For Ottawa Public Health clinics: <https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/resources/Corona/COVID-19-Vaccine-Screening-and-Consent-Form.pdf>

Step 3: Going to the vaccination clinic

- **Don't be early, and don't be late:** Arrive at the time recommended when booking. If it's advised that you to arrive no earlier than five minutes before your appointment, do that. Arriving early may only mean you'll have longer to wait at the clinic or make it more difficult to find parking.
- **Dress for success:** Wear **short sleeves** for easy access for a quick jab in the arm.
- **Come prepared:** Everyone is working hard to make the clinics efficient, but do be prepared to wait. Things to keep you distracted can help pass the time:
 - Bring activities or devices to keep yourselves occupied
 - Pack some **snacks and water** to keep hunger in check
 - Bring familiar **music** (and maybe headphones) that the person enjoys to help them feel grounded

A word about consent

If the person living with dementia is unable to provide consent for the vaccine:

- **Treat the decision** to get the vaccine **the same** as you would **other healthcare decisions**.
- Involve the person's **Power of Attorney or other appointed substitute decision-maker** if the person is unable to provide consent.

Step 4: At the vaccination clinic

- Clinics may be busy and noisy, resulting in heightened stress and confusion for people living with dementia.
- Explain that **you may have to wait** at different points in the process.
- **Everyone will be wearing masks**, and some staff will be wearing goggles and gowns, too.
- This may make it harder to communicate and be frustrating, but **it's part of keeping everyone safe**
- There may be arrows on the walls or floors to help us to navigate our way through the process.
- You may need to make a number of stops to talk to nurses or other health workers. They just want to make sure they have the right information to keep you safe. Explain that you **may need to answer the same questions a few times**.

Step 5: Whew! It's done.

Once you've received the vaccination, it may be helpful to offer reassurance.

- **Explain any potential after-effects** like soreness in the arm from the shot, headache or fever. These will pass and staff at the clinic will monitor you before you leave the clinic and explain what to watch out for.
- **Offer a drink or a snack** afterward to recharge.

Step 6: celebrate!

You've waited a long time for this, it's worth celebrating!

- Do a **favourite activity or get a treat**.
 - *"My mom loves ice cream. She gets her vaccine today, so we're having a cone!"*
- It's been a busy day: **Rest up** if the event was tiring.

For guidance about your unique care situation, contact your Dementia Care Coach directly, or the Dementia Society.

Dementia-Friendly Communication

- **Eye-to-eye:** In addition to verbal communication, make eye contact and speak at eye level to communicate directly and visually.
- **Keep it short:** Explain what you are doing using short, simple sentences. Try using “flu” instead of “virus.”
- **Provide reassurance:** Try to remain calm, smile, hold their hand. Remain positive; you are in this together. Try saying “I wish things were different” or “I don’t like this either” to acknowledge feelings.
- **Take a time out:** If the person becomes distressed, ask for a quiet location, redirect and try again later.
- **Shift the blame:** When it comes to social distancing, mask wearing, or hand washing, make sure you are not the one “making the rules.” Instead, explain these are doctors’ orders.
- **Be consistent:** Everyone in the support system should provide the same information.
- **Change the subject:** The person might ask repetitive questions or become distressed. Try to focus on something else.
- **Use humour:** The world is a strange place right now. The person might find masks or face coverings look odd. Laugh along with them!