



# NURSES ADMINISTERING COVID-19 VACCINES IN A PHARMACY SETTING PRACTICE GUIDELINE

*The Nova Scotia College of Nursing (NSCN) is the regulatory body for licensed practical nurses (LPNs), registered nurses (RNs) and nurse practitioners (NPs) in Nova Scotia. Our mandate is to protect the public by promoting the provision of safe, competent, ethical and compassionate nursing services by our registrants. The term nurse in this document refers to LPNs, RNs and NPs unless otherwise stated.*

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Our practice support tools are developed using current reference material. The source of this material is available upon request.

The COVID-19 immunization campaign is by far the largest and most aggressive vaccine program undertaken worldwide. The speed at which this program is unfolding is unprecedented and the importance of being successful is paramount to public safety.

Pharmacies have confidently operated many influenza vaccine clinics, and as part of Nova Scotia's COVID-19 immunization plan, community pharmacies will be providing some COVID-19 vaccines. Community pharmacies may employ nurse immunizers to support the immunization plan.

The vaccines in use are new and it is anticipated that more vaccines will be approved by Health Canada throughout 2021 and beyond. For many of these vaccines, handling and storage requirements differ from most common vaccines and clinical information and guidance about them is constantly evolving. Nurses<sup>1</sup> and other health care providers must stay current with evolving information about the vaccines and updates from Nova Scotia Public Health as they prepare to become COVID-19 immunizers.

Nurses employed in community pharmacies to administer the COVID-19 vaccine should consider the following:

## General Guidance

- Administration of the COVID-19 vaccines is within the scope of practice of all nurses.
- The Nova Scotia College of Nursing (NSCN) and Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists (NSCP) have developed a [Joint Statement on Nurses Administering COVID-19 Vaccines at Community Pharmacies](#) to support Nova Scotia's COVID-19 immunization plan.
- Nurses are expected meet their designation specific Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics where ever they practice and may use this practice support tool in conjunction with their standards and code.
- Nurses must possess the necessary competence (knowledge, skill, and judgment) to administer the COVID-19 vaccines and manage adverse reactions, including administration of epinephrine.
- Nurses may obtain the competence to administer vaccines (including the COVID-19 vaccines) by completing employer-based education, learning modules supported by the employer such as the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) online education courses, or a combination of both.
- The [Nova Scotia COVID-19 Vaccine Program: Information for Health Care Professionals](#) developed by Nova Scotia Public Health is a critical resource for nurses and other health care providers. The document will be updated by Nova Scotia Public Health as evidence on COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccines evolve. Nurses and other health care providers should save the link to this document and review it on a regular basis for updates. The document also includes links to important references and provides answers to questions relevant to nurses and other healthcare providers in a Q&A format.

## Authority to Administer COVID-19 Vaccines

- Nurses may administer COVID-19 vaccines in accordance with direction described in the [Nova Scotia COVID-19 Vaccine Program](#) document (See the *Storage and Dosing, Scheduling and Administration* section for more information.).

## Collaborative Practice

- Nurses and pharmacists are autonomous practitioners, each accountable for their own actions at all times.
- Nurses and pharmacists are responsible to collaborate with each other as necessary.
- Nurses should consult with the pharmacist and or other health care providers when necessary and in accordance with the direction described in the [Nova Scotia COVID-19 Vaccine Program](#).

1 In this document, nurses means LPN, RN, or NP.

## Client Assessment

- Nurses are required to assess clients and determine their eligibility for the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Nurses should refer to the *Special Considerations* and *Contraindications* sections of the [Nova Scotia COVID-19 Vaccine Program](#) document to support and guide their decision-making.

## Informed Consent and Education

- Nurses must obtain the client's informed consent for a COVID-19 vaccine.
- Nurses should refer to *Appendix 1: Guidance for Health Care Providers* of the [Nova Scotia COVID-19 Vaccine Program](#) document for guidance and support regarding informed consent of immunocompromised persons and persons with underlying autoimmune diseases.
- Nurses should refer to the *Guidance for Consent Management Pathways* section of the [Nova Scotia COVID-19 Vaccine Program](#) document for guidance and support to make decisions about when, and with whom they must consult about immunocompromised persons and persons with underlying autoimmune diseases.
- Nurses should refer to the *COVID-19 Vaccines in Canada* and *COVID-19 Vaccine Safety and Adverse Events Following Immunization (AEFI)* sections of the [Nova Scotia COVID-19 Vaccine Program](#) document for guidance and support as they provide education to clients.

## Policy

- Nurses should be aware of and follow existing pharmacy policy or process regarding management of adverse reactions, clients who experience a health emergency while in the pharmacy and clients not qualifying for a vaccine.

## Liability Insurance

- Nurses [licensed](#) with NSCN receive [professional liability protection](#) from a third-party vendor as part of their license.
- Liability protection applies in all settings and practice contexts where the nurse is employed.

## NSCN Practice Support

- [NSCN Immunization Practice Guideline](#)
- [NSCN Online Learning Module: Immunization Practice Guideline](#)  
**PLEASE NOTE:** This online learning module compliments the Immunization Practice Guideline and **does not** provide immunization, vaccine, or COVID-19 vaccine education.
- [Joint Statement on Nurses Administering COVID-19 Vaccines at Community Pharmacies](#)

If you have any questions, contact an NSCN Practice Consultant at [practice@nscn.ca](mailto:practice@nscn.ca).