



# Yuułu?if?ath Government V a c c i n a t i o n s & P H O

February 25, 2021

Questions about Vaccinations and Public Health Orders? Please review the detailed information, as provided from Dr. Helena Swinkels (Office of the Chief Medical Officer) and Marion Guenther (Clinical Nurse Specialist for Immunizations, CDPPH).

“COVID-19 vaccinations are a powerful tool against the spread of the COVID-19 virus – indeed, they're the only way we're going to end the pandemic. However, as life often teaches us, there is rarely just one solution to a difficult problem. And so it is with COVID-19.

At this stage, COVID-19 vaccines are an **extra layer of protection** rather than a replacement for the public health orders and recommendations from our Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry. All of us – even those who've been vaccinated – must continue to wear masks, maintain a safe physical distance, wash our hands frequently, and stay home while sick, even if symptoms are very mild.

**Here are the four top reasons we need to continue practicing public health measures even after getting vaccinated:**

- 1. We don't know how well the vaccine prevents spread of the virus.** We know that the vaccine works very well to protect those who are vaccinated from becoming seriously ill or sick at all. We also know that the vaccine *will* help to prevent the virus from spreading. What we don't know yet is by how much. This means that vaccinated people who don't have the illness may still be able to pass on the virus, although much less often than people who have not been vaccinated.
- 2. Not everyone is protected by the vaccine or can be vaccinated.** The COVID-19 vaccines are very effective – 95 per cent after two doses! But it takes two weeks for the vaccine to have any effect after the first dose, and even a vaccine that is 95 per cent effective after two doses means that five per cent of the population will *not* be protected. This could include you or your loved ones. What's more, some people choose not to, cannot or did not get the vaccine in the first place because of certain medical conditions, because they were sick or away during the community vaccine clinic, or because the vaccines are only licensed for adults (there is no vaccine available yet for persons under age 16, although testing is underway and we hope to have a vaccine soon).
- 3. We won't have community immunity until almost everyone has immunity.** We know that once 70 per cent or more of people in the community are immune to the virus, the potential for the virus to be transmitted will be much, much, lower. But until we have a vaccine for children, and for everyone outside of the community in which we work, attend school, or shop, following public health measures is the best way to keep people safe.
- 4. We want to protect all communities, not just ours.** Continuing to follow public health measures is the best way to protect those in and outside of our communities – especially those who are young, who are old, and who are vulnerable. It allows important services like support groups, children's programs and schools to remain open. It allows people in service and other industries to get back to the jobs they are dependent on for income, and it allows space in hospitals for all patients, not just COVID-19 patients. Finally, it helps ensure that less of the virus will be able to circulate in our communities as well as communities around us, thereby protecting friends and loved ones.

We know that maintaining public health measures for so long is hard – really hard. And we are heartened to see how well First Nations communities in BC are managing through this difficult time. Drawing upon the strengths and good medicine of intergenerational resilience, cultural teachings from Elders, and connection to each other and to the land, First Nations communities in BC are staying the course, following public health measures, and getting through this – together.”