

To: Nova Scotia Health Care Practitioners and Immunizers

From: Dr. Shelley Deeks, Deputy Chief Medical Officer of Health

Date: February 8, 2022

Re: *COVID-19 Primary Series for Children 5 to 11 years of age who are Moderately to Severely Immunocompromised (Third Doses)*

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recently updated its [Recommendations of the use of COVID-19 vaccines in children 5 to 11 years of age](#).

Children 5 to 11 years of age

After reviewing available and reassuring real-world safety data, NACI has strengthened its advice and now **strongly recommends** that children 5 to 11 years of age receive two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech (10 mcg dose) vaccine with an interval of at least 8 weeks. This interval gives children the opportunity to develop better and longer-lasting immunity, which will be important in future waves of the pandemic, and further minimizes the very rare risk of myocarditis or pericarditis following vaccination.

Evidence shows that some people who are moderately to severely immunocompromised have a reduced immune response to COVID-19 vaccines. While there are currently no available data on the safety, immunogenicity, or efficacy of an additional dose of a COVID-19 vaccine in children who are immunocompromised, studies have shown that a third dose of an mRNA vaccine leads to increased immune response in some adults who are immunocompromised. An additional dose provides another opportunity for those who are immunocompromised to develop a better immune response and in turn, better protection against COVID-19. In alignment with [NACI's strong recommendations](#), the following is now recommended for children (5 to 11 years of age) who are moderately to severely immunocompromised:

- Individuals who are 5 years of age and older and who meet [moderate to severe immunocompromise criteria](#) at the time of their first or second dose of their primary COVID-19 vaccine series are recommended to receive, and are eligible for, a third primary series dose of age-appropriate mRNA COVID-19 vaccine. Individuals 12 years of age or older who are moderately to severely immunocompromised are also eligible for a booster dose (i.e., a fourth dose) 168 days after their third primary series dose.
- Individuals who are 5 years of age and older and who meet [moderate to severe immunocompromise criteria](#) who have not yet been immunized with a primary series of COVID-19 vaccine are recommended to receive, and are eligible for, a primary series of three doses of an age-appropriate mRNA COVID-19 vaccine.

- Individuals who become moderately to severely immunocompromised more than 14 days after completion of the two-dose COVID-19 primary series typically will not need a third primary series dose but should receive a booster dose 168 days following completion of the two-dose primary series if they are 12 years of age or older.

To meet eligibility criteria for additional COVID-19 doses, moderately to severely immunocompromised is defined by specific criteria which may be found at:

- <https://novascotia.ca/dhw/cdpc/documents/third-doses-Covid-19-vaccine-immunocompromise.pdf> (eligibility criteria)
- <https://novascotia.ca/dhw/cdpc/documents/immunosuppressive-medication-list.pdf> (immunosuppressive medications), and
- <https://novascotia.ca/dhw/cdpc/documents/primary-immunodeficiency-list.pdf> (primary immunodeficiencies)

The interval between each dose in the primary series for individuals who are moderately to severely immunocompromised should be 28 days to 56 days. A vaccine schedule of 28 days between dose one and dose two, and 56 days between dose two and dose three is recommended.

Immunization providers are expected to verify that individuals meet criteria for moderate to severe immunocompromise and hence are eligible for an additional dose of COVID-19 vaccine for their primary series. After reviewing the list of primary immunodeficiency conditions, if immunization providers have questions related to the 5- to 11-year-old age group, they may contact the Pediatric Immunologist on call via the IWK switchboard at 902-470-8888. For COVID-19 vaccine questions related to primary immunodeficiencies in adults, providers may contact Dr. Gina Lacuesta at 902-425-3927 (office) or via the QEII switchboard at 902-473-2220. After reviewing the list of immunosuppressive medications, if providers have questions regarding medication eligibility, they may contact the [Nova Scotia Health COVID-19 Vaccine Pharmacist Consult Service](#) by calling 1-833-768-1151. **The contact information for immunization provider support is not to be given to individuals presenting for immunization.**

Individuals will be able to book third dose vaccine appointments for eligible children online or by phone on February 9th, 2022. When booking, individuals will be required to indicate that they have reviewed the definition of moderately to severely immunocompromised and that the person they are booking for meets criteria for a third dose. Individuals should be aware that immunization providers may confirm eligibility criteria and that they should bring a list of medications and other documentation which they may have (e.g. prescription bottles, insurance notes) regarding eligibility for a third dose of COVID-19 vaccine.