

April 19, 2021

## MANITOBA EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR ASTRAZENECA/COVISHIELD VACCINE, CONTINUES TO PROTECT MANITOBANS BY EXPANDING VACCINATION CAPACITY

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Public health officials are expanding the criteria for the AstraZeneca vaccine to all Manitobans aged 40 and over while continuing to implement measures to increase capacity, Health and Seniors Care Minister Heather Stefanson announced today.

“Tens of thousands of doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine remain in clinics and pharmacies across the province, which is why we’re expanding the eligibility criteria for the vaccine,” said Stefanson. “I want to thank physician and pharmacy partners for their work to provide vaccine and look forward to the numbers of doses administered increasing quickly over the coming days.”

Effective immediately, all Manitobans aged 40 and over will be eligible to receive the AstraZeneca/Covishield vaccine at a medical clinic or pharmacy. Eligible Manitobans can find their nearest clinic or pharmacy with available doses by visiting <https://manitoba.ca/covid19/vaccine/finder.html>.

“Based on all of the evidence available internationally to date, we continue to believe benefits of the AstraZeneca/ Covishield vaccine to protect against COVID-19 outweigh any potential risks,” said Dr. Joss Reimer, medical lead for the Vaccine Implementation Task Force. “Expanding the criteria will help us reach more Manitobans, particularly those who may face challenges or face barriers in going to a super site or pop-up clinic.”

The minister noted the change in eligibility comes as Manitoba continues to expand its capacity to provide the vaccine including:

- implementing a more responsive ordering process for medical clinics and pharmacies;
- opening new super sites in north Winnipeg and Steinbach in early May; and
- adjusting the use of pop-up clinics by locating them in areas where there is a significant barrier for the majority of people to get to the nearest super site.

In addition, changes are being made to the planning process for super sites as vaccine deliveries begin to rise.

“We’ve been operating with a small margin of doses carrying over from the end of one week into the next, in case a shipment of vaccine is delayed,” said Johanu Botha, operations lead for the Vaccine Implementation Task Force. “But supplies seem to have stabilized, so we are now able to tighten our processes and add a bump to our doses administered to help us get needles into arms as quickly as possible.”

For more information on vaccine eligibility and Manitoba’s vaccine rollout campaign, visit [www.protectmb.ca](http://www.protectmb.ca).