

To: Nova Scotia Health Care Practitioners and Immunizers

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

Date: February 7, 2022

Re: *COVID19 Booster Doses for Adolescents 12 to 17 years of age*

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recently provided [Guidance for the use of booster doses in adolescents 12 to 17 years of age](#).

NACI has reviewed the evidence on the need for, and benefit of, a booster dose in adolescents 12 to 17 years of age. At this time, NACI is making an off-label recommendation for booster doses ≥ 168 days after completion of a primary COVID-19 vaccine series only in adolescents 12 to 17 years of age who may be at high risk of severe COVID-19 outcomes due to underlying medical or social conditions, or who may experience systemic barriers to accessing health care. This includes adolescents who:

- have an underlying medical condition ([NACI's Rapid Response Summary](#)) that may put them at high risk of severe illness due to COVID-19, including those who are immunocompromised and who have already received a three-dose primary series (for adolescents who are immunocompromised, a booster dose would be their fourth dose);
- are residents of congregate living settings, including shelters, group homes, quarters for migrant workers, correctional facilities;
- belong to racialized or marginalized communities disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

Due to currently limited data on the effectiveness and safety of a booster dose in adolescents 12 to 17 years of age, including the rare risk of myocarditis and pericarditis following vaccination, and in alignment with NACI, it is recommended that only those in the adolescent age group who may be at higher risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19 due to medical and/or social risk factors receive a booster dose at this time. NACI has not recommended a booster dose for other adolescent populations due to the generally low risk of severe COVID-19 outcomes in adolescents especially those who have received a complete primary vaccine series. Health Canada, the Canadian regulator, has not approved the use of a COVID-19 booster dose for people under 18 years of age at this time. NACI will continue to monitor the evidence and will modify their recommendations as needed.

Data on the effectiveness and safety of a booster dose in adolescents are currently limited. Preliminary safety data from boosters in adolescents showed no additional safety concerns beyond those noted after receiving the first two doses of COVID-19

vaccine. Data on the rare risk of myocarditis and/or pericarditis following a booster dose of an mRNA vaccine in adolescents are still emerging. The use of the Pfizer-BioNTech (30 mcg dose) booster dose is preferentially recommended to a Moderna (50 mcg dose) booster dose as there are currently no data on the use of Moderna as a booster dose in adolescents 12-17 years of age.

Nova Scotian families with adolescents aged 12 to 17 who wish to receive a Pfizer booster dose and who do not fall into the recommended groups above, will be able to do so with informed consent. It is anticipated that appointment bookings for booster doses in the adolescent age group will be available by February 9th, 2022. Health care providers should encourage families to review the information provided during the booking process regarding what is known and unknown about booster doses in this age group, including the low risk of severe illness in this age group and the [rare risk of myocarditis and pericarditis](#) following COVID-19 mRNA vaccines. Because all individuals in this age group may be eligible, immunization providers **should not** attempt to verify that adolescents fall into the recommended groups.