

MESSAGE FROM THE REGISTRAR

RE: GUIDANCE TO PHYSICIANS REGARDING MEDICAL EXEMPTIONS FOR COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

Throughout Nova Scotia, many organizations are requiring that all staff and visitors be vaccinated against COVID-19. It is not unreasonable to expect that, in response, physicians will be asked to provide medical notes for patients who have chosen not to be vaccinated.

As physicians continue to work to mitigate any further spread of COVID-19, the College aims to support their leadership with clear guidance on their responsibilities in this circumstance.

Physicians must only support requests for a medical exemption from COVID-19 vaccination for patients with a legitimate medical condition that would warrant an exemption.

The office of the Chief Medical Officer advises the following are valid medical contraindications to receiving the COVID-19 vaccine:

- A history of severe allergic reaction (e.g. anaphylaxis) after previous administration of a COVID-19 vaccine using a similar platform (mRNA or viral vector).
- An allergy to any component of the specific COVID-19 vaccine or its container [polyethylene glycol (PEG) for Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines; tromethamine (trometamol or Tris) for Moderna COVID-19 vaccine; polysorbate 80 for viral vector vaccines (AstraZeneca and Janssen/Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccines)].
- A history of major venous and/or arterial thrombosis with thrombocytopenia following vaccination with AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.
- A history of capillary leak syndrome (CLS) following vaccination with AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.

Additionally, as a precaution, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends that people who experienced myocarditis and/or pericarditis after a first dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna) should wait to get their second dose of mRNA vaccine until more information is available.

Immunosuppression, auto-immune disorders, pregnancy, and breastfeeding are not contraindications to COVID-19 immunization. More details regarding contraindications can be found in the “contraindications and precautions” section of the [National Advisory Committee on Immunization \(NACI\) statement on COVID-19 vaccines.](#)

Given the rarity of these exceptions, the College expects that any notes written for patients who qualify for a medical exemption need to clearly specify:

- the reason they cannot be vaccinated against COVID-19, with specific medical information that supports the exemption; and
- the effective time period for the medical reason, specifically whether the exemption is permanent or time-limited.

If you find yourself in this situation, clearly and sensitively explain to your patient that you cannot provide them with a note or form requested, along with the reasons why, which might include referring them to the provisions of this notice. The authorized COVID-19 vaccines in Canada have been shown to be safe and effective against symptomatic COVID-19, and protect against severe disease, hospitalization, and death due to COVID-19.

I wish to express my appreciation to all physicians for their tireless work, ongoing professionalism, and commitment to their patients. Please contact me directly should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gus Grant', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr. Gus Grant
Registrar & CEO
College of Physicians & Surgeons of Nova Scotia