

5 Things to Know About Administering Vaccines

Pharmacy professionals have an ethical and professional responsibility to recognize and practice within the limits of their competence and with the patient's best interest in mind.

1. Identify Learning Opportunities

Pharmacists, interns, and students must possess sufficient knowledge of the vaccines and associated conditions to administer them safely. This includes assessing the patient to determine the clinical appropriateness of a vaccine, whether prescribed, requested by the patient or recommended by the pharmacist.

Pharmacists are expected to engage in routine self-assessment and to pursue continuing education when gaps are identified. OCP provides a number of tools to assist practitioners with ongoing learning and professional development, including a listing of [CE resources](#) available on the OCP website.

2. Use Proper Technique

Pharmacists, interns, and students must possess sufficient skills to perform a vaccine injection properly. This is essential to minimize the potential for adverse reactions and ensure effective levels of immunity are attained.

Prior to giving an injection to a patient, the practitioner must use aseptic technique, properly landmark the appropriate injection site, select the appropriate needle length and volume, and decide if a bunching or flattening technique should be used¹. Other learned skills include inserting the needle at the correct angle and depth, the rate of administration, and managing the patient's pain perception.

As with any learned skill, practice is important to be comfortable and confident when performing injections. When not part of routine practice, it may be challenging to gain hands-on experience. Consider taking a refresher course or enlisting the support of a peer who has mastered the technique to help you brush up on your injection skills.

3. Store Vaccines Appropriately

Designated managers are responsible for overseeing inventory management in the pharmacy. Policies and procedures must be in place to handle and store vaccines appropriately and address any deviations. This includes managing the cold-chain from procurement to administration, regular monitoring of the ambient pharmacy temperature, and temperature control of the refrigerators and/or freezers used. In addition to having adequate storage facilities, pharmacy staff must be familiar with and adhere to OCP's Policy — [Protecting the Cold Chain](#).

4. Maintain Effective Documentation

Documentation on the patient record should include relevant details, such as:

- Information on the pharmacist who performed the injection (and the supervisor, if applicable);
- The clinical assessment and information gathered from the patient;
- Confirmation that an informed consent was given by the patient or his or her authorized agent;
- The date and location the act was performed;

- Details on the vaccine administered (e.g., name, strength, volume, site of administration, lot number, DIN, expiration date);
- Circumstances relating to any adverse reaction experienced by the patient, and treatment recommended or administered as a result;
- Notification to the patient's primary care provider; and
- Provision of proof of vaccination to the patient for their [vaccine administration record](#).

Refer to the College's [Documentation Guidelines](#) for additional guidance.

5. Know the Limits of Independent Authority

Situations may arise where a pharmacist is asked to administer an injection that falls outside of the vaccines or circumstances included in Regulations. In these instances, delegation of authority from another healthcare professional with this authority would be required, such as a Medical Directive or a Direct Order.

Prior to accepting delegation, members should be familiar with OCP's [Policy of Medical Directives and Delegation of Controlled Act](#) and understand their professional responsibilities in doing so. Collaboration and communication with the prescriber in both delegation scenarios is important to ensure the best possible patient outcomes. 📄

¹<http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/publications/healthy-living-vie-saine/1-canadian-immunization-guide-canadien-immunisation/index-eng.php?page=8#p1c7a3b>