

## 50% of eligible York Region adults have received first dose of vaccine

York Region residents born in 1981 or earlier are now eligible to register for their COVID-19 vaccinations.

York Region Public Health set out their timelines on Friday just over a week after the Province stated that all Ontarians would be eligible to register for their shots by May 24.

Starting this week, all eligible groups 40 years of age or older will be able to book their appointments, along with health care workers and individuals with at-risk health conditions.

As of this Monday, May 17, the eligibility will drop to all York Region residents born in or before 1991. By the following Monday, May 24, all eligible age groups will be able to join the line.

"We are starting to see the slowing of new COVID-19 cases in our communities, but we need to remain vigilant," said Dr. Karim Kurji, York Region's Medical Officer of Health, in a statement. "We are at a critical juncture in our fight against COVID-19 and variants of concern. The sooner we can get as many York Region residents vaccinated as possible, the sooner we can look to reopen our businesses and our schools and return to a way of life many of us are missing."

The timelines announced Friday are in line with what the Province previously announced, but the Region has left the door open to these timelines shifting as vaccine supply dictates.

"Should York Region receive additional vaccine supply, every effort will be made to further advance vaccinations and open eligibility sooner," said the Region.

As of Friday, more than 478,000 York Region residents have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, equating to approximately 49 per cent of total eligible residents.

The Region's last expansion of eligibility requirements took place May 5 when appointments were opened to residents 50+, individuals aged 18+ in 16 high priority areas, and people who can't work from home. Other recently-added eligible groups include licenced child-care staff and special education staff who live and work in York Region (with appropriate documentation).

Criteria for individuals with highest and high-risk health conditions (and one essential caregiver) were expanded to include pregnant individuals, while registration was opened to staff, essential caregivers and any residents of long-term care homes, retirement homes, congregate care settings, and First Nations elder care homes who hadn't yet received a first dose.

Vaccinations can be booked at [York.ca/covid19vaccine](https://york.ca/covid19vaccine) or through local pharmacies selected to distribute vaccines. Although the Province is currently spearheading a pilot project distributing the Pfizer vaccine in select pharmacies in Toronto and Peel, and Moderna in select pharmacies in York, Durham, Hamilton, Ottawa and Windsor, Aurora's 11 participating drug stores were distributing AstraZeneca until the Province announced Thursday it was suspending first doses of AstraZeneca out of an abundance of caution.

### **POSITIVE MILESTONE**

York Region passed the 50 per cent mark in reaching all eligible adults with their first doses, the local public health unit announced Sunday. That milestone was passed just as the Region's 500,000th dose was administered.

"This milestone is a testament to the dedication of many individuals and partners who continue to advance York Region's mass immunization plan forward as quickly as vaccine supply allows," they said. "York Region is grateful for the significant contributions made by York Region's COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force, hospital partners, physician and partner-led clinics and many more. We are

making big gains in our community, and as eligibility continues to expand, we look forward to more vaccines and more great progress.

?We need a large percentage of the population to become immune to COVID-19 to really slow the spread of the virus. Achieving high levels of immunity through vaccination is our best approach for allowing individuals, families and businesses to safely resume normal life.?

## **LOCAL STATS**

As of Monday, May 10, Aurora has seen a total of 1,716 total cases of COVID-19. 1,594 cases are now marked as resolved and there have been 45 deaths attributed to the virus.

Of the 77 active cases of COVID-19 within the community, 73 are attributed to local transmission, close contact or unknown exposure, three to the workplace and 1 to institutional outbreak.

607 cumulative cases have been attributed to variants of concern with 566 of unknown lineage.

**By Brock Weir** Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter