

Pre-filling syringes for onward transportation of COVID-19 vaccine doses in exceptional situations

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The Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health (OCMOH) recognizes that there are extenuating circumstances of the COVID-19 immunization program which include:

- Limited and/or interruptions in COVID-19 vaccine supply
- Stringent and specific storage and handling requirements for the COVID-19 vaccines
- The need to minimize vaccine wastage, and
- The need to immunize vulnerable people who are not able to attend an immunization clinic.

Exceptional situations where pre-filling syringes for onward transportation of COVID-19 vaccine doses may be warranted include:

- Where the risk assessment demonstrates that movement of the vaccine would be a safer alternative for the person being immunized.
- Home visits for individuals who are unable to leave their home.
- Congregate living settings for a small number of residents who are unable to access the immunization clinic.

The below criteria must be adhered to when pre-filling syringes for onward transportation of COVID-19 vaccine doses in exceptional situations. **This is not to be implemented as part of routine practice.**

- Immunizers must follow regulatory, employer and professional practice requirements.
- Prefilling syringes for the onward movement of the vaccine should only occur when all other alternatives have been considered. For example, all methods should be exhausted to have clients attend the vaccine clinic to reduce the onward movement of the COVID-19 vaccines.
- In the exceptional circumstances where pre-filling syringes for onward transportation may be warranted, PHAC's [Overview of key features of COVID-19 vaccines](#)¹ can be consulted for transportation guidelines after puncture. Additionally:
 - Vaccine must be prepared as close as possible to the time of administration.
 - The prefilled COVID-19 vaccine syringe must be labelled to indicate vaccine type, vaccine lot number, and date and time the vial was first punctured.
 - Syringes will be individually packaged in protective wrap.
 - Syringes will be protected from light and packed in coolers designated for vaccines to prevent cold chain excursions.
 - The cooler must be secured during transport to minimize movement.
 - The vaccine will be handled with care to avoid shocks, drops and vibration as much as possible. Vaccine will be administered immediately upon arrival at the site or client's residence.

This recommendation applies only in the context as presented for COVID-19 vaccine immunization clinics and does not extend to the prefilling of syringes for vaccine administration in other instances.

¹ [PHAC's Overview of key features of COVID-19 vaccines](#) outlines that there is not enough data to support transportation of open vials and loaded syringes for Pfizer Tris formulation products. However, doses of Pfizer Tris products which were transported under previous guidelines (within 6 hours of vaccine vial being punctured) and have already been administered can be considered valid based on information shared by the manufacturer.