



The College of
Physicians and Surgeons
of Newfoundland and Labrador

MEDICAL EXEMPTIONS FOR COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

Notice to College Members

September 9, 2021

Attached is a message from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Newfoundland and Labrador to our physicians and relevant stakeholders concerning medical exemptions for COVID-19 vaccination. It is modelled on the communication that the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario sent to its physicians on September 2, 2021.

All College communication to its members will be by email.
It is a professional obligation for College members to read all College communications.

Medical Exemptions for COVID-19 Vaccinations

In Newfoundland and Labrador, there are a number of organizations which have announced the requirement of mandatory vaccinations to work and/or access certain services.

Given the level of fatigue we are all feeling - health care workers in particular – we all need to do whatever we can to mitigate any further spread of COVID-19.

We, as the medical regulator in Newfoundland and Labrador, want to do our part by ensuring the guidance around complex COVID-19 issues is strong and clear.

As more workplaces and facilities require vaccination, physicians may see an increase in requests for medical exemptions. We are already beginning to hear of requests for unfounded exemptions and we need to ensure we are only allowing COVID-19 vaccine exemptions in the few situations where they are warranted. In summary, the guidance states that if you are asked by your patient to provide information to support a medical exemption from receiving a COVID-19 vaccine, your patient must have a legitimate medical condition that would warrant an exemption.

Generally speaking, there are very few acceptable medical exemptions to the COVID-19 vaccination (e.g., an allergist/immunologist-confirmed severe allergy or anaphylactic reaction to a previous dose of COVID-19 vaccine or to any of its components that cannot be mitigated; a diagnosed episode of myocarditis/pericarditis after receipt of an mRNA vaccine). Given the rarity of these exceptions, and in light of the fact that vaccines have been proven to be both safe and effective, any notes written for patients who qualify for a medical exemption need to clearly specify:

- The reason they cannot be vaccinated against COVID-19 (i.e., document clear medical information that supports the exemption); and
- The effective time period for the medical reason (i.e., permanent or time-limited).

Thank you for your work and professionalism in committing to patient care.