

## Youth encouraged to get vaccine; myths dispelled

By Mark PavilonsEditor

Apprehension and "urban legends" may be hindering younger people from stepping up and getting the COVID-19 vaccination. York Public Health is encouraging everyone to opt-in to the vaccination campaign. Some believe the vaccines may cause sterility, but Patrick Casey, Director, Corporate Communications on behalf of York Region Public Health, said there is no evidence the COVID-19 vaccine will affect fertility or pregnancy. People who are trying to become pregnant now or who plan to try in the future may receive the COVID-19 vaccine. "There is no association between COVID-19 vaccines and fertility problems; the COVID-19 vaccine does not cause infertility," he said. Some object to putting "chemicals" in their bodies and are weary of the substances that make up the vaccines. None of the vaccines approved by Health Canada contain the live virus that causes COVID-19. The vaccines cannot give you COVID-19. The COVID-19 vaccine will not alter your DNA. "Those who have been vaccinated cannot shed spike proteins created by the vaccine and infect others," officials said. The COVID-19 vaccine does not contain controversial substances; all of the vaccine ingredients are readily available from Health Canada online or in the product's documentation, Casey stressed. Further, none of the COVID-19 vaccines were developed using fetal tissue and they do not contain any material such as implants, microchips or tracking devices. "We urge people to opt-in to vaccines on a voluntary basis; we have many public health nurses, pharmacies and health care providers who are willing to speak with individuals with questions to ease their anxieties to help decide to take these vaccines voluntarily. York officials are pleased to hear the Ontario government's recent announcement to make COVID-19 vaccination policies mandatory for high-risk settings. The province had consulted extensively with health units on this approach. "The health of our community comes first and it's a responsibility we should all share; vaccinations help keep our community safe by stopping the spread of COVID-19 and its variants," Casey said. Receiving the vaccine can protect others who are vulnerable to infection such as children under 12 years of age who cannot receive the vaccine, people who have severe allergies to the vaccines and people with serious health conditions which can decrease the effectiveness of the vaccine. York health experts noted no vaccine offers 100% protection against COVID-19 infection. However, those who have received both doses of a COVID-19 vaccine and become infected should experience milder symptoms and are much less likely to become severely ill, require hospitalization or be admitted into the ICU. "This speaks to the importance of getting vaccinated, not only to protect yourself but those around you and the most vulnerable in our community, like children under 12 years of age who are not currently eligible to receive a vaccine. "While 76% of York's population age 12 and older have received both doses, there are still many who have yet to roll up their sleeves. Those individuals are encouraged to walk into one of the clinics to do so as soon as possible. Clinic times and locations can be found at [york.ca/covid19vaccine](http://york.ca/covid19vaccine) For individuals who are still hesitant to receive their vaccine, it's okay to have questions. You can discuss your concerns with your doctor, pharmacist, primary health care provider or one of York Region Public Health's nurses to help you make an informed decision. You can also call the York Region Health Connection line at 1-800-361-5653 and speak with a public health nurse. "The recent increase in cases is also a good reminder COVID-19 is not going away anytime soon; these next few months will require all of us to continue to remain vigilant; please continue to follow public health measures such as wearing a mask, maintaining a physical distance from others and practicing good hand hygiene, even if you are fully vaccinated."