



Vaccination and Immunization

Adopted December 2021, Effective December 2021

A college must carry out its activities and govern its regulated members in a manner that protects and serves the public interest. A college must also provide direction to and regulate the practice of the profession by its regulated members. Policies define professional behaviour and conduct expected of all regulated members registered in Alberta, are enforceable under the *Health Professions Act* and will be referenced in the management of complaints and discipline hearings and appeals.

Policy

The College of Chiropractors of Alberta (CCOA) recognizes that vaccination is a safe and effective public health practice for the prevention of infectious diseases.

Vaccination is a restricted activity and is not within the scope of chiropractic practice in Alberta.

The CCOA directs regulated members to refer all patient questions, consultation, and education regarding vaccination and immunization to the appropriate public health authority and/or regulated health professional whose scope of practice includes the restricted activity of vaccination and immunization.

Please see the Guidance to the Profession to inform the required application of this policy.

Terms used in this Policy and Guidance

- “Regulated member” - any person who is registered as a regulated member of the College
- “Must” refers to a mandatory requirement
- “May” means that the regulated member may exercise professional discretion
- “Patient” includes, where applicable the patient’s legal guardian or substitute decision maker



Guidance to the Profession – applying the Vaccination and Immunization Practice Policy

Restricted Activities

Restricted Activities are procedures or services identified in the *Health Professions Act* that require specific professional competence to be performed safely. The performance of these activities must be authorized by government legislation to be included in the scope of practice for a healthcare profession. When restricted activities are not included in the scope of practice for a profession, then those activities are not in scope.

Vaccination is a restricted activity and chiropractors **are not** permitted to perform that activity. Thus, vaccinations are out of scope for chiropractors. The exclusion of vaccines from authorized activities for chiropractors also means that the education surrounding vaccines, distribution of information regarding vaccines, clinical consultation for the intent of informed consent to receive or not receive vaccinations, and advertising regarding vaccinations are all activities that are also considered out of scope for chiropractors.

Patient Questions and Interactions

Despite the administration and education for vaccination being out of scope for chiropractors, patients may still ask you questions about your vaccine status, your opinion on whether a patient should be vaccinated, or disclose an adverse reaction to vaccination.

Vaccine Status

Chiropractors may respond to direct questions from a patient regarding their personal vaccine status; however, they are under no obligation to do so. In some situations, it may be appropriate for chiropractors to permit clinic staff to respond on their behalf to a direct question from a patient regarding their vaccine status.

A truthful response of "yes", "no", "not yet", or a "I decline to provide personal health information", are the only appropriate responses.

Regardless of the vaccine status response to a patient, a regulated member **must not** provide their opinion, discussion, or commentary on vaccines, even if a patient asks follow-up questions about the decisions that lead to your declared vaccine status. Office staff must also be aware that vaccine education in the office is not in scope, and that they should not participate in conversations regarding vaccination.

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Promotion of Vaccine Status

Regulated members **must not** promote their vaccination status in any marketing including, but not limited to, websites, social media, or in-office signage/materials, which states if the regulated member and/or their staff have or have not received vaccinations, or link to information provided by other websites.

Informed Consent to Vaccination

When patients ask you if they or someone they know should be vaccinated, regulated members **must** respond to questions from patients on vaccination and immunization by directing all patient questions, consultation, and education regarding vaccination and immunization to the appropriate public health authority and/or health professional whose scope of practice includes vaccination.

Regulated members **must not** discuss their decision to receive or not receive vaccinations, including any information that resulted in their vaccine decision. Regulated members **must not** proactively alert or alarm patients to potential side effects of vaccine(s), including directions to search for side effects. If a patient raises vaccine side effects or has questions on potential side effects, regulated members must refer them to public health.

Management of Vaccine Adverse Events reported to Chiropractors

Regulated members who are concerned that a patient has experienced an adverse side effect after vaccination should take the following actions to support the patient in receiving care from the appropriate practitioner:

- **Must** contact emergency services (911) when there is an indicated urgent clinical necessity.
- **Must** refer the patient to an appropriate regulated health professional (physician or public health nurse) whose scope of practice includes the management and legislatively required reporting of adverse events to vaccination.
- **Must not** frighten the patient that their symptoms or health conditions may be a result of vaccines, instead regulated members should indicate certainty that the best person to follow up with regarding the patients' reported symptoms post vaccination is the appropriate public health authority and/or health professional whose scope of practice includes vaccination.
- **May** continue to follow up with the patient regarding their health presentation and treat the patient for conditions that are within a chiropractor's scope of practice.
- **Must** maintain a clinical record of the patient consultation including the referral to emergency services or an authorized practitioner for management of those concerns.

Glossary of Terms

Immunity – Protection from an infectious disease.

Immunization – A process by which a person becomes protected against a disease through vaccination.

Restricted Activities – Procedures or services identified under the *Health Professions Act* that require specific professional competence to be performed safely.

Vaccine – A preparation that is used to stimulate the body's immune response against diseases.

Vaccines are usually administered through needle injections, but some can be administered by mouth or sprayed into the nose.

Vaccination – The act of introducing a vaccine into the body to produce protection from a specific disease.