

COVID-19 VACCINES AND PEOPLE WITH CANCER



Should people with cancer and cancer survivors get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. People with cancer and cancer survivors should receive the COVID-19 vaccine. People with cancer are at a higher-than-average risk of severe complications of COVID-19, so the vaccine can help protect you from serious illness and even death. Family caregivers and other people who live with a person with cancer are also encouraged to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.



Are the vaccines safe for people with cancer?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccines are safe for people with cancer. A small number of people may have allergic reactions to certain ingredients in vaccines, so it is important to talk with your doctor first if you have ever had an allergic reaction to a vaccine or medication.



What if I am in active treatment?

Researchers are studying when the best time is for people in active cancer treatment to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Some treatments, such as chemotherapy or immunotherapy, may lessen vaccine effectiveness. In these cases, your doctor may recommend receiving the vaccine between or after treatments. You may need to delay your vaccine shot if you have received a bone marrow/stem cell transplant or are having other cellular therapy, such as chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy. The vaccine will not affect your cancer treatment. Ask your doctor when you should receive the vaccine.



Do I still need to wear a mask, wash my hands, and social distance after getting vaccinated?

Yes. Although people who have received the vaccine have less severe infections and reduced rates of hospitalization, they can still get and spread the virus. Therefore, it is important for people with cancer to continue following these important safety precautions when in public spaces.



What if I have already had COVID-19?

People who have recovered from COVID-19 should still receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Receiving the vaccine increases antibodies that further protect against reinfection. If you become reinfected with COVID-19, the vaccine likely helps avoid death and serious outcomes due to COVID-19, such as hospitalization. People who received convalescent plasma or monoclonal antibodies to treat COVID-19 should wait 90 days before receiving a COVID-19 vaccine.



What are the side effects of the vaccine?

Possible side effects of the vaccines, depending on which vaccine is received, include pain at the injection site, tiredness, headache, muscle and joint pain, chills, fever, nausea, and swelling of the lymph nodes. Side effects should go away in a few days. In rare cases, serious side effects can happen. The benefits of vaccination, however, outweigh the small chance of a rare side effect occurring. Talk with your doctor about what to expect, and discuss if you can use over-the-counter medications to relieve pain or discomfort. You should not take these medications before vaccination to prevent side effects.



If I have received the COVID-19 vaccination, should I receive additional doses?

Official guidance is continuously being updated on additional doses for individuals who have received either the 2-shot or 1-shot vaccine. Please talk with your doctor to determine the best approach for you.



Where can I get the most up-to-date information about cancer and COVID-19?

Cancer.Net is a trusted source of doctor-approved information for people living with cancer and those who care for and care about them. For updated information, please check back regularly at www.cancer.net/covid19.

Cancer.Net[®]

ASCO | KNOWLEDGE CONQUERS CANCER

For more information on COVID-19 and people with cancer, visit www.cancer.net/covid19

October 2021

Resources:

- www.asco.org/covid-resources/vaccines-patients-cancer
- www.asco.org/covid-resources/patient-care-info/general-info
- www.nccn.org/covid19
- www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html
- www.dana-farber.org/covid-19-facts-and-resources/covid-19-vaccine-for-patients
- www.fredhutch.org/en/news/center-news/2021/01/cancer-patients-covid19-vaccine-coronavirus.html
- www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/covid-19-vaccine-what-you-need-to-know
- www.mdanderson.org/patients-family/becoming-our-patient/planning-for-care/coronavirus-protections/covid-19-vaccine-information.html
- www.mskcc.org/coronavirus/what-people-cancer-should-know-about-covid-19-vaccines