



Frequently Asked Questions about the COVID-19 Vaccine for Cancer Patients

When will the COVID-19 vaccine be available to cancer patients?

We don't yet know when the COVID-19 vaccine will be offered to cancer patients. The government decides when different groups should be considered for the COVID-19 vaccine.

I am a cancer patient, is the COVID-19 vaccine safe for me?

Cancer patients were not included in trials and testing of the COVID-19 vaccine.

We have experience with similar types of vaccines given to cancer patients. These vaccines were found to be safe for cancer patients.

Many cancer patients have a weakened immune system which makes it harder to fight infections. There are risks of getting a COVID-19 infection. Because of this risk, the benefits of getting the vaccine outweigh the risks for most cancer patients.

Radiation therapy does not weaken the immune system. Cancer patients receiving only radiation therapy can get the vaccine whenever it becomes available to them.

What we know from the past:

We know how people who have weakened immune systems have responded to similar vaccines (not the COVID-19 vaccine). These vaccines were safe in cancer patients and they did not have different or major side effects. Although we do not have direct evidence on the COVID-19 vaccine in cancer patients, the science supports that it is safe.

Where can you learn more about vaccine safety?

You can read more about vaccine safety here: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccine-safety> (click here)

This website will not tell you about vaccine safety for cancer patients. It will tell you more about:

- the safety of COVID-19 vaccines
- how they work
- possible side effects

What are the side effects of the COVID-19 vaccination?

We don't know if the side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine are different for people who have weakened immune systems.

The most common side effects for people with healthy immune systems were:

- pain where they received the needle
- fatigue (tiredness)
- headache
- myalgias (muscle aches or pains)
- fever

Who should I talk to about whether I should get the COVID-19 vaccine?

If you had cancer but you no longer have appointments at a cancer centre or unit, having cancer should not prevent you from receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

If you are a cancer patient seeing a cancer doctor (oncologist), the cancer team will make a recommendation about getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

We will be sure to let you know more when we have more information.

When should I talk to my oncologist about whether I should get the COVID-19 vaccine?

The government will provide further guidance on when and how you can get the COVID-19 vaccine.

The COVID-19 vaccine is not yet available to patient with cancer.

Your oncology team is able to discuss the topic of getting the vaccine once it is available.

Want to learn more?

Preliminary guidance on key populations for early COVID-19 immunization

This website provides early guidance for patients who are immunocompromised

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/national-advisory-committee-on-immunization-naci/guidance-key-populations-early-covid-19-immunization.html>

Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine: What you should know

Learn how the vaccine works, is given to patients and more.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/covid19-industry/drugs-vaccines-treatments/vaccines/pfizer-biontech.html#a1>

Moderna COVID-19 vaccine: What you should know

Learn how the vaccine works, is given to patients and more.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/covid19-industry/drugs-vaccines-treatments/vaccines/moderna.html>

More information about vaccines and treatments for COVID-19

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/covid-19-vaccine-treatment.html>

COVID-19 Vaccine Safety

<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccine-safety>

Recommendations for people with serious allergies

<https://healthycanadians.gc.ca/recall-alert-rappel-avis/hc-sc/2020/74543a-eng.php>

How Health Canada approves vaccines in Canada

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/biologics-radiopharmaceuticals-genetic-therapies/activities/fact-sheets/regulation-vaccines-human-canada.html#2.0>