

COVID-19 Vaccine for Adult Cancer Patients

The CDC, the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN), other leading cancer-related organizations, and Hawai'i Pacific Health recommend the vaccine to all cancer patients. If you are still unsure whether you should get a COVID-19 vaccine, please ask your oncologist at your next scheduled clinic appointment. It is **your** choice whether to get vaccinated or not.

As millions of people have received the COVID-19 shots, we have learned more about the benefits and side effects for people with high risks, such as those with cancer and those who have weakened immune systems.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has said having a weakened immune system should not stop someone from receiving the current COVID-19 vaccine. This includes those with cancer or those taking medication that affects their immune systems. However, in these cases, the vaccine is less effective than in someone who does not have a weakened immune system. Those with weakened immune systems will need an additional dose of the mRNA vaccines.

I am receiving treatment for my cancer, or I am a cancer survivor; should I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

- **YES**, unless you had a bone marrow or stem cell transplant or certain other treatments, or if you are currently in a research study, it's okay to receive the **Pfizer (Comirnaty) or Moderna mRNA COVID-19 vaccine or the Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) Vector Vaccine**. If you are unsure, ask your cancer team. There is more information on the back of this sheet about the different types of COVID-19 vaccines.

When should I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

- If you are about to start cancer therapy, you should get the vaccine before you start.
- If you are already on cancer therapy, get the vaccine approximately 4 to 7 days before your next round. If you have a low count of a certain white blood cell (are neutropenic), wait until you no longer have this condition.
- If you are a cancer survivor, get the vaccine as soon as possible.

Should I get the COVID-19 vaccine if I am a part of a research study?

- In most cases, you should be able to get the vaccine. However, check with your research team to confirm this. Some research studies may not allow you to receive the vaccine.

I had a bone marrow or stem cell transplant, CAR-T cell therapy, or TIL therapy for my cancer; can I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

- If you are about to have treatment, speak with your cancer team for guidance.
- If you had your transplant within the past year, contact your transplant center to see if you should receive the vaccine. If your treatment was longer than one year ago, ask your oncologist.

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- If you are currently receiving treatment, you should wait at least three months post therapy to receive the vaccine.

Should my family and friends I live with or see often get the vaccine?

- Your family, friends, and caregivers you see often should also get the vaccine.

What are the different types of vaccines, and which is recommended for those with cancer?

- The following are the two types of COVID-19 vaccines being offered-in the United States:
 - **mRNA vaccines** include those being produced by Pfizer (Comirnaty) and Moderna.
 - **Vector vaccines** include those that are being produced by Janssen (Johnson & Johnson)
- The Pfizer (Comirnaty), Moderna, and Janssen vaccines do not contain live viruses.
- Each vaccine may cause different symptoms, and more information can be found on their individual FDA fact sheets, see link below.
- The Pfizer (Comirnaty) and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines need more than one shot. The first shot starts building protection. You'll need a second shot a few weeks after to get the most protection from the vaccine. See below regarding the new recommendation for an additional dose.
- The Janssen COVID-19 vaccine only needs one shot.

What about an additional dose of the vaccine?

- For those that received the Pfizer (Comirnaty) or Moderna vaccine, the FDA and CDC has recommended that those with moderately and severely weakened immune systems, including cancer patients, should receive one additional dose of the mRNA vaccine at least 28 days after your 2nd dose.
- For those that received the Janssen vaccine, there are no FDA or CDC recommendations on additional doses at this time.

If you are experiencing symptoms, or think you may have COVID-19, contact your primary care provider's (PCP) office. If you do not have a PCP, you may contact the Hawai'i Pacific Health COVID-19 Virtual Clinic at 808-462-5430 to review your symptoms and order COVID-19 test if needed.

For more information, please visit:

- www.hawaiipacifichealth.org/covid19vaccine
- www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html
- <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/eua/index.html> Fact Sheets for recipients and caregivers.