

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

People with cancer and the COVID-19 vaccines

Are people with cancer more vulnerable to COVID-19 than the general population?

People with cancer are at an increased risk of getting COVID-19 and have a greater risk of serious infection if they do get COVID-19.

What are the side effects of the vaccine for people with cancer?

The general information on side-effects from the COVID-19 vaccine can be found [here](#).

There is currently no evidence that people with cancer experience different or worse side effects than the general population.

Should I get the COVID-19 vaccine if I am currently receiving cancer treatment?

Yes.

Talk to your cancer doctor, as depending on what treatment you are on, they may want to time the vaccine to be delivered at a certain point in your treatment cycle.

Will the COVID-19 vaccine affect or interact with cancer treatments?

There is no evidence currently to suggest that the COVID-19 vaccine interacts with cancer treatments.

Decisions around timing of the vaccine are about making sure the vaccine is as effective as possible, rather than concerns around how it will interact with cancer treatments.

I had cancer 5 years ago, is it OK for me to get the vaccine?

If you have finished your cancer treatment and have been discharged from your hospital specialist, you should get the vaccine when it is offered to you.

If you have any concerns you can discuss these with your GP.

Who should people with cancer talk to about receiving the COVID-19 vaccine?

We recommend that you talk to your cancer doctor if you have questions or concerns.

If you have been discharged from hospital services, we recommend you talk to your GP if you have questions or concerns.

Do I need a third primary dose of the COVID-19 vaccine?

The Ministry of Health has recommended that individuals aged 12 years and older who are severely immunocompromised receive a third primary dose of Pfizer/BioNTech or AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.

Not all cancer patients are recommended to have a third dose, as only some will be severely immunocompromised.

Your cancer doctor or your primary care practitioner will use the Ministry of Health criteria to help you find out if you are eligible.

Criteria can be found [here](#).

If I have a third primary dose of the COVID-19 vaccine should I still get a booster after 6 months?

Yes.

The third dose is **not** considered a booster dose. This means that if you have a third primary dose, you are also eligible for a booster dose after 6 months.

More information on booster doses can be found [here](#).

What is the difference between a third primary dose and a booster?

A third primary dose is only recommended for people with cancer who are severely immunocompromised. This is to give your immune system a better chance of building protection to COVID-19. Your cancer doctor or primary care practitioner can help you work out if you need a third primary dose.

A booster dose is available to the general population six months after your primary vaccine doses. This is because it is likely that the immunity from the vaccine will slowly reduce over time.

Those who have a third primary dose are also eligible for a booster.