

COVID-19 Vaccination

What is the COVID-19 vaccine?

There are many COVID-19 vaccines in development. The aim of vaccination is to prevent infection with COVID-19 and protect people from becoming ill.

In the UK, the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine has been approved for use by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). The AstraZeneca (Oxford) vaccine may be approved by the MHRA but is not yet available in the UK.

Should people who are having chemotherapy or radiotherapy be vaccinated?

Yes. The Department of Health recommends vaccination for people who are immunosuppressed because of disease or treatment.

If you think you may have had COVID-19 you can still have the vaccine, but you shouldn't have the vaccine if you currently have confirmed COVID-19.

If you are due or have recently had a bone marrow transplant seek advice from your transplant team.

Can the vaccination cause COVID-19?

No. The vaccine doesn't contain any live virus, so it cannot cause COVID-19

The Pfizer BioNTech vaccine contains a piece of genetic code that tells our cells to make a protein found on the surface of COVID-19. The AstraZeneca Oxford vaccine is made from an inactivated virus (not LIVE). In both, cases the immune system should respond to vaccine and then remember what COVID-19 looks like.

Will the vaccine stop me getting COVID-19?

We do not know whether the COVID vaccine will work as well in patients who have had cancer treatment. You may not get full immunity, but It may offer some protection and some protection is better than no protection.

Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe for people who are having chemotherapy or radiotherapy?

The vaccine has been tested in tens of thousands of patients and safety will be very closely monitored by the MHRA. As far as we know, clinical trials didn't include patients on active treatment for cancer, but we think it is likely to be safe.

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When should the vaccine be given to people who are having chemotherapy or radiotherapy?

Pfizer BioNTech: The vaccine should be administered in 2 doses, a minimum of 21 days apart

AstraZeneca (Oxford Vaccine): The vaccine should be administered in 2 doses, a minimum of 28 days apart

If you are due to start treatment and have not already had the vaccine, having it 2 weeks before you begin treatment might allow time for your body to produce antibodies which help protect you against the COVID-19 virus. However, you do not achieve full immunity until after the second dose and we do not know when the vaccine will be available for all patients. Discuss with your hospital team when is best to have the vaccine.

We do not know when the best time is to give the vaccine to patients already on chemotherapy. With other vaccines, like flu, we suggest giving just before your next course of chemotherapy. If this is not possible, vaccinating between courses of chemotherapy is will be safe and effective.

Where you have chemotherapy continuously (with no break), ask your hospital team for advice. The vaccine may be given during a course of radiotherapy.

Can I have the COVID-19 vaccination at the same time as other vaccines?

Based on current information you should wait at least 7 days between vaccines

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