

# COVID-19 VACCINES AND PEOPLE WITH CANCER



## Are the vaccines safe for people with cancer?

The COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials completed so far enrolled very few people with cancer, so there is not definitive data on the safety or effectiveness of the currently authorized vaccines (Pfizer BioNTech, Moderna, and Janssen/Johnson & Johnson) in people with cancer. That said, there is no reason to believe that the COVID-19 vaccines are not safe for people with cancer. A small number of people have developed a serious allergic reaction to ingredients of the vaccine, such as polyethylene glycol (PEG), so it is important to talk with your doctor first if you have ever had an allergic reaction to an ingredient in a vaccine or medication.



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

**Always check with your doctor first about whether the COVID-19 vaccine is right for you.**

In most cases, people with cancer and cancer survivors should receive the COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available to them. People with cancer are at high risk of complications of COVID-19, so the vaccine can help protect you from serious illness.



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

**Yes.** Health experts are also still learning if people who have received the vaccine can still spread COVID-19. It will take time for enough people to be vaccinated to reach herd immunity, so continue following these important safety precautions. Herd immunity is when a large part of the population is immune to a disease, making it harder for the disease to spread.



## What if I am in active treatment?

Researchers are figuring out when the best time is for people in active cancer treatment to receive the COVID-19 vaccine so it is as effective as possible. Some treatments, such as chemotherapy, immunotherapy, or radiation therapy, may make the vaccine less effective, so giving the vaccine between or after treatments may be recommended. You may need to delay receiving the vaccine if you have received a bone marrow/stem cell transplant or are on a cellular therapy, such as chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy. The vaccine will not affect your cancer treatment. If you are in active cancer treatment, ask your doctor when you should receive the vaccine.



## What if I have already had COVID-19?

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), people who have recovered from COVID-19 should still receive the COVID-19 vaccine. People who have recovered from COVID-19 may become infected again, so receiving the vaccine may offer further protection. The CDC recommends that 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?

Common side effects of the 2-shot vaccines include pain at the injection site, tiredness, headache, muscle and joint pain, chills, and fever. Common side effects of the 1-shot vaccine include pain at the injection site, headache, fatigue, muscle aches, and nausea. Side effects often go away in a few days. Talk with your doctor about what to expect and discuss if you can use over-the-counter medications to relieve pain or discomfort. The CDC does not recommend taking these medications before vaccination to prevent side effects.

**Cancer.Net**<sup>™</sup>

Doctor-Approved Patient Information from ASCO<sup>®</sup>

For more information on COVID-19 and people with cancer, visit [www.cancer.net/covid19](http://www.cancer.net/covid19)

March 2021

Resources:

- [www.asco.org/asco-coronavirus-resources/covid-19-patient-care-information/covid-19-vaccine-patients-cancer](http://www.asco.org/asco-coronavirus-resources/covid-19-patient-care-information/covid-19-vaccine-patients-cancer)
- [www.nccn.org/covid19](http://www.nccn.org/covid19)
- [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html)
- [www.dana-farber.org/covid-19-facts-and-resources/covid-19-vaccine-for-patients](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.mskcc.org/coronavirus/what-people-cancer-should-know-about-covid-19-vaccines)