

## CancerCare Manitoba Patient Information

### Frequently Asked Questions about the COVID-19 Vaccine

*Although this set of questions refers to patients with cancer, **patients with serious blood disorders should also talk to their CCMB physician prior to getting the vaccine.***

Patients may find additional useful information on the Government of Manitoba COVID-19 Vaccine Questions and Answers page: <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/vaccine/faq.html>

#### **1. What is the risk of COVID-19 for cancer patients?**

Someone who has a weakened immune system, an active cancer or is on anticancer treatment may be at a higher risk of getting COVID-19. Some groups of cancer patients are also at a higher risk of serious illness with COVID-19.

It is important to talk to your CCMB physician to see if you are at increased risk of COVID-19. Your risk is affected by:

- Time since diagnosis
- Type of cancer
- Type of treatment
- Your health history

#### **2. How does a vaccine work?**

Vaccines lower the risk of someone getting a disease by working with the body's immune system to build protection against the disease they have been vaccinated for. This protection helps to prevent the disease and reduces your risk of serious illness.

#### **3. How is the vaccine given?**

The COVID-19 vaccine is given by injection into the muscle, usually in the upper part of the arm. The currently available vaccines include two separate injections that are given at different times. The timing of the second injection depends on the type of COVID-19 vaccine. It is important to complete both injections for the best protection against COVID-19.

#### **4. Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe for cancer patients?**

We know the COVID-19 vaccine is safe for adults in the general public. However, there are special considerations for cancer patients, especially those who have a weakened immune system or those who are on anticancer treatment. While we know the vaccine does not cause COVID-19, we do not know if the vaccine will work in those with a weakened immune system to build the desired protection against COVID-19.

We recommend that you talk to your CCMB physician prior to proceeding to getting the vaccine. CancerCare Manitoba is actively working with Manitoba's Vaccine Implementation Task Force to review evidence from around the world on the best use of the COVID-19 vaccine for cancer patients.

Individuals with severe allergies should avoid receiving the vaccine at this time. If you have a history of severe allergies to food, medicine, environmental agents or other known allergens, talk to your health care provider before getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

#### **5. When is the best time during cancer treatment to receive the vaccine?**

Your body's immune system may not develop the desired protection against COVID-19 following vaccination if you have a weakened immune system or are on anticancer treatment. The best time to provide this vaccine to cancer patients depends on where you are in your cancer journey.

We recommend that you talk to your CCMB physician prior to proceeding to getting the vaccine. They will discuss with you if the vaccine is right for you, and when is the best time to get it.

CancerCare Manitoba is actively working with Manitoba's Vaccine Implementation Task Force to review evidence from around the world on the best use of the COVID-19 vaccine for cancer patients.

#### **6. I have finished my cancer treatment. When should I get the COVID-19 vaccine?**

The best timing to get the COVID-19 vaccine depends on things such as the type of cancer and the kind of treatment received. While we know the vaccine does not cause COVID-19, we do not know if the vaccine will work in those with a weakened immune system to build the desired protection against COVID-19.

We recommend that you talk to your CCMB physician prior to proceeding to getting the vaccine. CancerCare Manitoba is actively working with Manitoba's Vaccine Implementation Task Force to review evidence from around the world on the best use of the COVID-19 vaccine for cancer patients.

## **7. What are the most common side effects to the COVID-19 vaccine?**

Serious side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine are very rare. Most side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine are mild and will go away on their own.

The most common side effects are:

- Pain in your arm where the needle was given
- Fatigue (feeling very tired)
- Headache
- Body chills
- Muscle aches
- Joint pain
- Fever
  - Any temperature taken by mouth of 38.3 °C (100.9 °F) or higher, OR
  - A temperature taken by mouth of 38.0 °C (100.4 °F) for at least one hour
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting

If side effects last more than 2-3 days, contact your health care provider. It will likely get recommended that you get tested for COVID-19.

## **8. If I have the COVID-19 vaccine, do I still need to wear a mask?**

Yes. It is still important to continue to follow public health guidelines. We do not know if the vaccine will work with cancer patient's immune system to build the desired protection against COVID-19, or if getting the vaccine will prevent you spreading the virus to others.

Wear a mask, wash your hands, keep 6 feet apart (physical distancing) and stay home when you are sick.

## **9. Should people living in my home get the COVID-19 vaccine?**

Yes, all people living in your household should get the vaccine when they become eligible according to the provincial vaccination guidelines.

People living in your household need to know that individuals with severe allergies should avoid receiving the vaccine at this time. If they have a history of severe allergies to food, medicine, environmental agents or other known allergens, they need to talk to their health care provider before getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

**10. Where can I get more information?** Check the CCMB website or ask your CCMB physician.