

Vaccinations for patients with cancer or blood disorders

2024/25

If you are receiving chemotherapy or steroids, your immune system may be slightly weaker than usual. This may make it harder for your body to fight off infections. Make sure you are up to date with all the vaccines you are eligible for to help protect yourself against preventable infectious diseases.

Flu, COVID-19 and pneumococcal (PPV) vaccines

You are eligible to receive vaccination against

- seasonal flu
- COVID-19
- pneumococcal infection.



This is because these infections can be a major cause of harm to people with weakened immune systems. Evidence also suggests that getting the flu and COVID-19 viruses at the same time is associated with increased severity of disease compared to those with COVID-19 alone. It is therefore more important than ever to ensure best protection from both infections.

Contact your GP and arrange to have these vaccinations as early as possible. The vaccines cannot cause infection.

This year the flu vaccine will also be available for household contacts of anyone who is immunocompromised. Your household contacts should ask for the vaccine from their GP.

- Your vaccines should be given in the week before your next dose of chemotherapy.
- Patients with aplastic anaemia (a rare blood disorder) should not be vaccinated unless recommended by your haematologist.
- Children and young people with a weakened immune system should not receive the nasal vaccine for the flu. You will be offered an alternative vaccine that does not contain the live virus.

You may also be eligible to receive other vaccines:

Shingles

Shingles is caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox and it can lead to severe pain and prolonged, serious illness for some people.

You are eligible to receive vaccination against shingles during 2024/25 if you:

- are aged 50 years and over on 1 September 2024 (ie those born on or before 01/09/1974) AND have a weakened immune system;
- are aged 18 to 49 years of age who have had a stem cell transplant (those born between 01/09/2006 to 02/09/1974).

RSV

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) can lead to inflammation of the lungs, which can be serious for some people. You are eligible to receive vaccination against RSV during 2024/25 if you are:

- aged 75 years on or after 1st September 2024;
- aged 75 to 79 years on 1st September 2024.

If you turn 80 in the first year of the programme, you can still get vaccinated up 31 August 2025.

Contact your oncologist or haematologist for advice if you are due to start chemotherapy or immunosuppression drugs.

For more information on each vaccine, visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/vaccines or scan the QR code:



For information leaflets on each vaccine, visit www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications or scan the QR code.



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