

Flu Vaccine and Cancer Treatment

Patient and Family Information Sheet

People with cancer on treatment often wonder if they can get the flu vaccine. This handout includes general information about the flu vaccine for people receiving cancer treatment. Talk to your cancer care team if you have any questions or concerns.

Can I get the flu vaccine if I am receiving cancer treatment?

It is safe to get the flu vaccine by injection (shot- given with a needle) if you are on most cancer treatments. Please check with your treatment team if you are on immunotherapy. The injected flu vaccine uses a dead virus.

You should not get the nasal spray flu vaccine if you are on cancer treatment. The nasal spray is made from a live vaccine. A live vaccine contains a weakened living virus, which can cause serious illness in people with a weakened immune system.

When is the best time to get the flu shot if I am on cancer treatment?

- ✓ Before you start your cancer treatment, if possible.
- ✓ If you are currently on **chemotherapy or immunotherapy**, the best time to get the flu shot is 48 hours before or after treatment. This is when your blood counts are still near the normal range.
- ✓ If you are going to be starting **radiation**, the best time to get the flu shot is before starting treatment. If you are currently receiving **radiation**, consult your care team.
- ✓ If you are getting **targeted or hormone therapy**, you can get the flu shot at any time.
- ✓ If you are getting **immune checkpoint inhibitors**, talk to your cancer care team about if and when to have the flu shot.

Cancer Centre of
Southeastern Ontario
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Centre des sciences de
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Is it safe to get the high dose flu shot made for people over the age of 65?

Yes. It is safe to get the high dose flu shot made for people over the age of 65.

Is there anyone who should not get the flu shot?

Do not get the flu shot if you:

- × Are allergic to any of the vaccine components
- × Have a very low platelet count
- × Are currently undergoing a stem cell or bone marrow transplant

Can I get my flu shot and my COVID vaccine at the same time?

Yes. You can get your flu shot and your COVID vaccine on the same day as your COVID vaccine. You can also get your flu shot and COVID vaccine on different days.

Should my family and household members get the flu vaccine?

It is safe for family and household members to get the flu vaccine. If you have a weakened immune system, the flu vaccine is recommended for family and household members. This will help lower your chance of coming in contact with the flu.

Family and household members can safely get the nasal spray, unless the person with cancer is severely immunosuppressed after a stem cell or bone marrow transplant.

If you have any questions or concerns, talk to your cancer care team before getting any vaccinations.