



Vaccinations



Blood cancer can stop your immune system from working well. This is called immunosuppression or immunocompromise. It puts you at greater risk of serious illness from everyday infections. Vaccinations help your immune system respond faster to germs.

Vaccinations are a safe way to help protect you from infections.

Live and non-live vaccines

There are two main types of vaccine:

- **Non-live vaccines** cannot give you the disease they're designed to protect you from. They're safer for immunosuppressed people than live vaccines.
- **Live vaccines** contain weakened versions of bacteria or viruses. If your immune system is weak, they can cause the infection they're trying to prevent.

Live vaccines are not safe for people with blood cancer who have a weak immune system. They could make you very ill.

Non-live vaccines:

- ✓ Flu jab
- ✓ COVID-19
- ✓ Pneumococcal
- ✓ Shingles
- ✓ Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)
- ✓ Diphtheria, tetanus and acellular pertussis (whooping cough), polio, Haemophilus influenza type b (Hib), hepatitis B (6 in 1 vaccine)
- ✓ Meningococcal (MenB, MenACWY)
- ✓ Human papillomavirus (HPV)

Live vaccines:

- ✗ Flu nasal spray vaccine
- ✗ Measles
- ✗ Mumps
- ✗ Rubella
- ✗ Varicella (chickenpox)
- ✗ BCG (tuberculosis)

Travel vaccines used for safe travel or entry to some countries may also be live vaccines. These include live vaccines for cholera, dengue, typhoid and yellow fever. Non-live options are available for cholera and typhoid.

There may be other live vaccines not included in this list. Always check with your GP or travel clinic whether any vaccine they offer you is live or not.



Vaccinations you're eligible for

If you're living with blood cancer, it's important to get the vaccinations you're eligible for. Your haematology team may recommend the following:

- ✓ Annual flu jab in line with national vaccination campaigns
- ✓ COVID-19 in line with national vaccination campaigns
- ✓ Pneumococcal: two doses at least 4 weeks apart
- ✓ Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), if you're 65 to 79
- ✓ Shingles: two doses at least 8 weeks apart

After a stem cell transplant or CAR T-cell therapy, you'll be eligible for more vaccinations. These include childhood vaccinations to help to rebuild your immune system.

Your haematology team will tell you which vaccinations you'll need and when to have them. This may include booster doses for some vaccines.

It's normal to have mild symptoms, like fever, or tiredness, after a vaccine.

Vaccinations for people you live with

Your close contacts and people you live with can help by having their vaccinations. This also helps protect you. It's best if everyone is up to date with their vaccinations.



It may be safer for you if they only have non-live vaccinations. It depends on your individual situation. Ask your haematology team what's best for you.

Need support or information?

- Scan the QR code or visit leukaemiacare.org.uk
- Call our freephone helpline on **08088 010 444**
- Send a WhatsApp to **07500 068065**
- Email support@leukaemiacare.org.uk



This information is aimed at people in the UK. We do our best to make sure it is accurate and up to date but it should not replace advice from your health professional. If you have any feedback or you'd like a list of our sources, please email information@leukaemiacare.org.uk.

This material was produced with the financial support of an educational grant from Otsuka, who had no editorial input into its content.

