

## Information about COVID-19 Vaccines

### Why have the COVID-19 vaccines been developed?

The aim of the vaccines is to protect people from becoming unwell and hopefully prevent infection.

There are many COVID-19 vaccines in development, these include, the Pfizer BioNTech and The AstraZeneca (Oxford) vaccine.

### Should people who are having chemotherapy or radiotherapy be vaccinated?

**Yes.** The Department of Health recommends vaccination for most of the population, including people who have a weakened immune system due to disease or treatment.

If you think you may have had COVID-19, you should still have the vaccine, but only when you are feeling better and you should wait for at least four weeks after the start of your symptoms or a positive test. You should not have the vaccine if you currently have confirmed COVID-19.

If you are due or have recently had a stem cell transplant seek advice from your transplant team.

### Can the vaccination cause COVID-19?

**No.** The vaccines do not contain any live virus, so cannot cause COVID-19

### Will the vaccine stop me getting COVID-19?

The vaccines protect people from becoming seriously unwell. We do not know whether the COVID vaccine will work as well in patients who have had cancer treatment. You may not get full immunity, but it may offer some protection and some protection is better than no protection.

You should continue to follow standard COVID-19 precautions, e.g. social distance, wear a mask and wash hands regularly.

### Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe for people who are having chemotherapy or radiotherapy?

The vaccine has been tested in tens of thousands of patients and safety will be very closely monitored. As far as we know, clinical trials didn't include patients on active treatment for cancer; however, based on Department of Health advice and our experience with other vaccines, it is expected to be safe.

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Patients having targeted therapies and immunotherapy are likely to benefit from having the vaccination.

Side effects reported to date have been similar to those seen following other vaccines such as feeling generally unwell, achy, headache, fatigue and pain at the injection site. If you do experience any unexpected or severe side effects following the vaccine, please let the team know who administered the vaccine, for example your GP or hospital team. It is very important to also let your oncologist or haematologist know.

### **When should the vaccine be given to people who are having chemotherapy or radiotherapy?**

If you are due to start treatment and have not already had the vaccine, having it two weeks before you begin treatment might allow time for your body to produce some antibodies, which help protect you against the COVID-19 virus. However, both the Pfizer BioNTech and AstraZeneca (Oxford) vaccine require two doses to be given and you do not achieve full immunity until 7 days after the second dose. We do not know when the vaccine will be available for all patients and it may not be possible to delay treatment.

We do not know when the best time is to give the vaccine to patients already on chemotherapy. With other vaccines, like flu, we suggest giving just before your next course of chemotherapy. If this is not possible, vaccinating between courses of chemotherapy is likely to be safe.

The vaccine may be given during a course of radiotherapy, immunotherapy or to people on hormonal treatment.

### **Can I have the COVID-19 vaccination at the same time as other vaccines?**

Based on current information you should wait at least seven days between vaccines

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