Pennsylvania Department of Health

VACCINATION OF ADULTS WITH CANCER AND CANCER SURVIVORS

KNOW THE FACTS

WHY VACCINES ARE IMPORTANT IF YOU CURRENTLY HAVE OR HAVE HAD CANCER?

- Infections are the second most common cause of non-cancer related deaths within the first year after a cancer diagnosis.
- Cancer and its treatments can affect the immune system and make an individual more susceptible to infections from bacteria or viruses.
- People with cancer or a history of cancer are at higher risk of complications and hospitalizations related to the flu and pneumonia.
- Vaccines are used to help a person's immune system recognize and fight off harmful germs such as bacteria or viruses, like the flu and pneumonia.

HOW DO I LOWER MY RISK OF INFECTIONS? WHO DO I TALK TO ABOUT THIS?

Talk to your doctor or medical team. Your doctor may recommend certain vaccines be given right away or they may want to select a time before or after treatment depending on the type of vaccine and your current level of immunity. Encourage those around you to get up to date with their own vaccinations.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF VACCINES?

1. **Live-attenuated vaccines** use a weakened (attenuated) form of the germ that causes a disease. Cancer patients should talk with their doctor or medical teams about the **risks and benefits** of live-attenuated vaccines and the safest vaccination strategy for their situation. Ideally live vaccines can be given **2-4 weeks** before the start of cancer treatment or after the body has recovered enough to have an adequate immune response.
2. **Inactivated vaccines** contain a killed version of the germ, making them safer for people with compromised immune systems, including cancer patients.

HOW IS THE SAFETY OF VACCINES DETERMINED?

In the United States (U.S.), there is a rigorous, multi-step testing process for vaccines, including large clinical trials involving tens of thousands of people. To ensure vaccines are safe, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has established strict safeguards. Millions of people have received FDA-approved vaccines safely, including cancer patients and cancer survivors. It is important to note that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the FDA, other agencies and researchers in the U.S. closely monitor the safety of vaccines through ongoing data analysis, early detection of potential safety concerns, and prompt public health action if needed.

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VACCINES RECOMMENDED FOR ADULTS WITH CANCER: GUIDELINES FROM THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CLINICAL ONCOLOGY (ASCO) *	
Influenza (Flu) Vaccine	Annually for everyone 6 months or older including cancer survivors and caregivers
Pneumococcal Vaccine	Ages 19 and over
COVID-19 Vaccine	As per the latest CDC schedule for immunocompromised adults
Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Vaccine	Ages 60 and over
Shingles Vaccine	Ages 19 and over
Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis (Tdap) Vaccine	Ages 19 and over and have not received dose of Tdap vaccine within the last 10 years
Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) Vaccine	Ages 19 - 26. Ages 27- 45 should discuss with your doctor
Hepatitis B (Hep B) Vaccine	Ages 19 - 59. Ages 60 and over for high risk or other coexisting conditions

Note: Certain vaccines may or may not be recommended based on your health history. Always discuss timing and appropriateness of vaccinations with your doctor or medical team.

Please scan below to learn more about vaccines and vaccine safety.

*** This is the most recent guideline published by ASCO and it is adapted from CDC's Adult Immunization Schedule by Medical Condition and Other Indications.**