

Planning for your COVID-19 vaccine

Information for people with primary immunodeficiencies

November 23, 2022

Why is planning for a COVID-19 vaccine important?

- Some people with primary immunodeficiencies who take certain medications or treatments may want to talk to their health care provider about timing their vaccine with their treatment in special ways.
- It is also important that you monitor how you are feeling in the days leading up to your vaccine appointment. If you are feeling sick, rebook for when you are feeling better.

Should I get the COVID-19 vaccine? Will the vaccine work for me?

- All of the COVID-19 vaccines available in Canada are safe. Vaccines teach your body to develop antibodies against the COVID-19 virus. These antibodies will help fight off future infections and protect from serious illness.
- Doctors and researchers have looked at the evidence. They agree that, unless you have a **very** serious allergy to any of the vaccine ingredients, you should strongly consider getting the COVID-19 vaccine. This is because you have a higher chance of experiencing severe symptoms if you get COVID-19.
- People with primary immunodeficiencies weren't included in the clinical trials of the COVID-19 vaccine. However, the way the vaccines work means that there is a strong chance that your immune system will learn to protect you from COVID-19 much better than if you did not get the vaccine.

What if I test positive for COVID-19?

- If you've recently had a positive COVID-19 test result, you can wait up to 3 months for a booster dose. The likelihood of a COVID-19 reinfection during this period of time is small because having COVID-19 boosts your immunity.
- You can also choose to get a booster dose at any time after your symptoms have passed. It is not harmful to get vaccinated and it will give you a good boost to your protection.

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What about the medications or treatments that I take?

- Some people with primary immunodeficiencies take immune modulating medications and treatments. For **some** of these medications and treatments, timing your vaccine around your treatment may help the vaccine to work best. **This decision should be made with your health care providers.**
- While we do not have specific information on immune modulating medications and their impact on the response to the COVID-19 vaccine, we do have information from other vaccines.

Talk to your health-care provider about timing your vaccine around your treatment if you are taking any of the following therapies:

- IVIG (Intravenous Immunoglobulins)
- Prednisone (more than 20mg/day)
- Rituximab
- SCIG (Subcutaneous Immunoglobulins)
- There are two options you can discuss with your health-care provider:
 1. Do not change medication dosing, go ahead, and book your vaccine appointment.
 2. Adjust your medication to optimize your immune system's response to the COVID-19 vaccine.

This decision should be made with your health care provider. Together, you should take into consideration your risk of getting COVID-19 and your risk of having a flare up of your condition if you alter your medication timing. Please reach out to them before you book your vaccine appointment.

I am taking medications, but it's not any of the ones listed above:

- If you don't see your medication listed, or if you take medications for another condition and you aren't sure if you need to worry about timing, you can also look at the [COVID-19 vaccine planning considerations](#) posted on the BCCDC website for that condition (if available), and/or call 8-1-1 or talk to your health-care provider.

How else should I plan for my vaccine appointment?

- Review HealthLink BC's general information on [COVID-19 vaccines](#).
- It is important that you are feeling well when you get your vaccine. However, some people with primary immunodeficiencies have chronic symptoms, like diarrhea, cough or difficulty breathing.

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- In the 2-3 days leading up to your vaccine monitor yourself: are any of your symptoms new or getting worse? If you aren't feeling well, rebook your vaccine appointment for another day. You won't lose your place in line. Consider reaching out to your health care provider about your worsening symptoms.
- You can feel safe going to the COVID-19 vaccine clinic, as they are following all COVID-19 safety precautions.

What or who should I bring with me?

- Please bring your BC Services Card or CareCard to your appointment.
- You can bring any medical or mobility equipment that you need.
- If you need to, you can bring a trusted friend, family member or caregiver with you to support you through the process and/or translate for you if needed. Please only bring one person.

What happens after my vaccine?

- Everyone who gets a COVID-19 vaccine will stay on location to be monitored for 15 minutes after they receive their vaccine.
- If you have any new or worsening symptoms once you go home, please call your health care team or 8-1-1. If you have a severe allergic reaction, call 9-1-1 immediately.
- You can learn more about what to expect after your vaccine [on the BCCDC website](#).

My vaccine planning checklist

- Read the COVID-19 vaccine information for my condition(s)
- Time my vaccine appointment around my medication and treatments (if relevant to me)
- Talk to my doctor if I have any questions or need any help planning my medication
- Monitor how I'm feeling leading up to my vaccination appointment. Is anything new or getting worse compared to how I usually feel?
- Plan to bring the medical and mobility equipment I need with me