

COVID-19 and cancer:

What you need to know



→ Do I have a higher chance of getting very sick from COVID-19 if I have cancer?

Yes. If you have cancer or have been treated for cancer in the past, you have a higher chance of getting very sick from COVID-19. Your immune system may be less able to fight infections such as COVID-19 due to your cancer or cancer treatment.



This is especially true for people with blood cancers, such as leukemia or lymphoma. Certain cancer treatments can also weaken your immune system, such as:


- Chemotherapy (a type of treatment intended to destroy cancer cells or stop them from growing)
- Long courses of corticosteroids (steroids)
- Certain types of immunotherapy (a treatment that includes substances that work with the immune system to fight disease)
- A stem cell transplant (a type of treatment in which a patient gets blood-forming cells through a vein to replace their own which have been damaged)
- A bone marrow transplant (a type of treatment in which a patient gets blood-forming cells through a vein to replace their own which have been damaged)



Worried about your chances of getting very sick from COVID-19?

Talk with your doctor for advice based on your health history

Visit our website to find out if you can get a COVID-19 vaccine at no cost through CDC's Bridge Access Program.

 bit.ly/3QMEI8B





How can I protect myself from COVID-19 if I have cancer?



Talk to your cancer care team about when to get the COVID-19 vaccine. If you recently got cancer treatment that suppresses the immune system - such as chemotherapy, a stem cell or bone marrow transplant, or cell therapy - your doctor may suggest you wait a while to get the vaccine so your immune system can recover.



Wear a mask that is comfortable and fits well when leaving home. Surgical masks and respirators (like KN95s or N95s) will give you more protection than a cloth mask.



Avoid large gatherings and crowded spaces. If you must be indoors with other people, open a window to clear the air.



Try to stay at least 6 feet away from others



Wash your hands often, especially before eating or after coughing and sneezing. You can also use hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol.



What should I do if I have symptoms of COVID-19?



1. Get tested

Use a home COVID-19 test kit or go to an urgent care or other health care professional



3. Ask your doctor about treatments for COVID-19

You must start taking these medicines within 5 to 7 days of when your symptoms started



2. If you test positive, tell your doctor:

Tell your doctor what symptoms you have and when they started



4. Take care of yourself

Rest and drink a lot of fluids



If your symptoms start to get worse quickly, call your doctor.



Learn more

COVID-19: What People with Cancer Should Know
bit.ly/whatpeoplewithcancershouldknow



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