



COVID-19 Protection: Four Steps Blood Cancer Patients Can Take

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society has been speaking directly to patients and their caregivers since the start of the COVID pandemic. As the pandemic has evolved, so have their concerns. LLS developed this document to help blood cancer patients stay safe from COVID and balance out activities important to their quality of life. It's important that patients make personalized risk decisions in consultation with their oncology treatment team.

1 Talk to your oncology treatment team about your immune status

A suppressed immune system increases the risk of serious outcomes from COVID-19 and can decrease vaccine effectiveness.



Some blood cancers, including those that impair B-cells, can suppress the immune system. These cancers include:

- Chronic lymphocytic leukemia
- Diffuse large B-cell lymphoma
- Follicular lymphoma
- Mantle cell lymphoma
- Marginal zone lymphoma
- Waldenström's macroglobulinemia

Treatments for these and other types of blood cancer (e.g., multiple myeloma) may also suppress the immune system:

- BTK inhibitors (*Imbruvica, Calquence, Brukinsa*)
- Anti-CD20 antibodies (*Rituxan, Gazyva*)
- CAR T-cell treatments (*Breyanzi, Kymriah, Tecartus, Yescarta*)
- Stem cell transplants



The immune system is complex and its ability to fight infections and respond to vaccinations can change before, during and after cancer treatments so it's important to talk to your healthcare team often about your immune health.

2 Maximize your protection by getting all COVID-19 vaccines as recommended

The LLS National Patient Registry and other studies have shown that COVID vaccines are safe and offer at least some protection to most blood cancer patients. Even if vaccines don't always completely protect you from getting COVID, they can minimize the risk of the worst outcomes, including hospitalization and death.



DOSES RECOMMENDED

Initial COVID-19 vaccine series*

At least one dose of 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccine

Additional doses of Moderna or Pfizer 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccine may be given to people with moderate to severe immunocompromise at intervals determined by the patient's healthcare provider.

* Three doses of Moderna or Pfizer vaccines, or one or more doses of Novavax or Janssen vaccine, including in combination with Moderna or Pfizer vaccines. Note that this initial series could have occurred at any time in the past. However, there needs to be at least two months between the last dose in the initial series (or previous bivalent vaccine) and the 2023-2024 COVID-19 dose.

Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are for use in people 6 months and older; Novavax vaccine is for use in people 12 years and older. Please talk to your healthcare provider about what's right for you.



If you haven't gotten all of your COVID-19 vaccine doses, talk to your healthcare team today about what's right for you.

3 When it comes to COVID-19 risk, decide what's right for you

Some people isolate completely or attend only small gatherings, while others are comfortable taking more risk. Talk to your healthcare team about finding a balance between COVID risk and quality of life that's right for you.



Assessing Risk

- Age
- Immune status
- Vaccination status
- Size of gathering
- Indoor/outdoor
- Are others masked?
- Are others vaccinated?

4 Make a plan in case you get sick and start treatment ASAP



1) Have COVID home tests that have not expired handy. You can check for details about specific test kits on the FDA web site [here](#).



2) Call your healthcare team immediately if you have symptoms, have a known exposure or test positive



3) [Start treatment](#) as soon as possible and talk to your healthcare team about what to do if your symptoms get worse



4) Rest, drink plenty of fluids, take other medications like fever reducers if your doctor recommends them