

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT COVID-19 VACCINATION **& PATIENTS WITH CANCER**

1. Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe in cancer patients undergoing treatment (chemotherapy, immunotherapy, targeted therapy or radiation therapy)?

Yes, studies have shown that the COVID-19 vaccine is safe in cancer patients undergoing treatment. International expert groups have recommended that cancer patients receive the COVID-19 vaccine to protect themselves.

2. Are the side effects similar to patients who are not on cancer treatment?

Yes, the side effects are similar to those experienced by patients who are not on cancer treatment. Most side effects of this vaccination are mild, such as pain at the injection site, muscle ache, fatigue, headache and fever, and these can last for a day or two. This is a sign of the body's normal immune system response to recognise and fight the COVID-19 virus.

3. What happens if I develop a fever, 24 to 48 hours after the vaccination?

If you develop a fever, you may call the NCIS CancerLine (9772 0569) during office hours for further advice. You can also take simple fever medication such as paracetamol tablets every 6 hours if you develop fever in the first 24 to 48 hours after the vaccination. If the fever persists or you feel unwell, you should go to your nearest Emergency Department and seek medical attention.

4. Is the COVID-19 vaccine effective in me as I am currently on cancer treatment?

Small studies have shown that the COVID-19 vaccine can provide protection in patients on cancer treatment. Patients with weakened immune systems may experience a weaker immune response to the vaccine but vaccination is likely able to confer some benefits. It is important for cancer patients to be vaccinated to reduce the risk and severity of a COVID-19 infection.

5. I am a breast cancer survivor and am being scheduled for a mammogram. Can I still go for my COVID-19 vaccination?

The COVID-19 vaccine is safe for breast cancer patients. However, some patients may experience swollen lymph nodes after the vaccination, hence the vaccine should preferably be injected on the opposite side of the affected breast. For the same reason, mammograms should be scheduled either before the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, or at least 4 to 6 weeks after the final dose.

6. I am scheduled for a PET-CT scan. Can I still go for my COVID-19 vaccination?

The COVID-19 vaccine is safe for patients who will be undergoing a PET-CT scan. However, some patients may experience swollen lymph nodes after the vaccination, and this may affect the PET-CT results. If possible, PET-CT scans should be scheduled either before the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, or at least 2 to 4 weeks after the final dose.

7. What else can I do to protect myself from the COVID-19 virus?

Vaccination is only part of the strategy to protect yourself from a COVID-19 infection. You should continue to wear a mask with high filtration capability, practice good hand hygiene and appropriate social distancing.

8. When can I receive my COVID-19 vaccine?

You should discuss with your doctor who is treating you for your cancer on when you can have your COVID-19 vaccination. If you are not due to see your doctor soon, you may call the NCIS Call Centre (6773 7888) during office hours or email cancerapptline@nuhs.edu.sg.

9. Where will I receive my COVID-19 vaccine?

If you are currently undergoing treatment at the National University Cancer Institute, Singapore (NCIS), your COVID-19 vaccination location will be at the National University Hospital (NUH) or Ng Teng Fong General Hospital (NTFGH). If you have completed your cancer treatment, on surveillance or a cancer survivor, you may also receive your COVID-19 vaccine at the vaccination centres in the community.