

Navigating Vaccines with your Healthcare Provider



What immunocompromised* people should know.

Your healthcare team — including your doctor, pharmacist, nurse, or specialist — can help you understand vaccines based on your health.

Every health journey is unique, and vaccine decisions can feel confusing, stressful, or even scary. That's why it's important to talk to someone who knows your medical history. Below are some tips to help guide the conversation with your healthcare team.



Before the conversation

► Understand your health

If you have a weakened immune system, you may be at an increased risk for severe illness and complications from infections. It is important to understand your health condition and how vaccines can help reduce your risk of infections.

► Learn about vaccines that may be right for you

Vaccines are especially important for people with a weakened immune system. In some cases, people with weakened immune systems may receive certain vaccines earlier or on a different schedule (e.g., extra doses) than those without weakened immune systems.

A different schedule is normal since the vaccines you need depend on many factors, including the type and severity of immune system compromise, age, medical history, and other health risks. Below are vaccines that are commonly recommended for immunocompromised adults (this is not a complete list).



You know your body best

Remember, your personal experience is an important factor in making decisions about vaccines.

Commonly recommended vaccines

- COVID-19
- HPV
- Influenza
- Pneumococcal
- RSV
- Shingles



Vaccine Information Sheets

Learn more about vaccines commonly recommended for immunocompromised people.

*Immunocompromised is a term used to describe a weakened immune system that can be caused by a variety of medical conditions and drug treatments



► Prepare your vaccine records

You may have already received some of the recommended vaccines. Bring your vaccine records to your appointment to ensure your healthcare provider has the most up-to-date information.

If you don't have a copy of your records, ask your healthcare provider or contact your local public health unit to request a copy.

► Understand your region's vaccination programs

Each province/territory has its own vaccination program.

This means that depending on where you live, you may need to get these vaccines at a doctor's office, pharmacy, or public health clinic.

You can find more information about your region's specific vaccine program on government websites, or ask a healthcare provider if they can help you.



► Prepare questions

It's okay to ask questions and ask for clarification. This can help you have a more productive conversation about vaccines.

It may also help to write down your questions ahead of time to guide your discussion.

Consider asking

- I've heard this vaccine is recommended for people who are immunocompromised. Based on my health condition, would you recommend that I receive it?
- Where and when can I get this vaccine?
- Do I need a prescription to get this vaccine?
- Is there a cost to get this vaccine?
- How many doses of this vaccine are given?
- Should I expect any side effects from this vaccine?
- Will this vaccine interfere with my current treatment plan? If so, when should I plan to get this vaccine?
- Is this vaccine safe for people with my condition?
- Will this vaccine work as well for me or will my immune system respond differently?
- Should my family members and/or close contacts also get this vaccine to help protect me?





During the conversation

► Mention vaccines early

Appointments can feel rushed, but it's important to make time to talk about vaccines as part of your health.

At the start of your visit, let your healthcare provider know you'd like to discuss vaccines that can help protect you. This helps ensure there is enough time. Here are some ways to bring it up:

- "Before we get started, I'd like to make sure we have enough time during this appointment to talk about any vaccines I might need."
- "I've made note of some vaccines that I'd like to discuss with you. Can we please talk about these during today's visit?"
- "I know appointments can go by quickly, but I'd really like to review my vaccines at some point during this visit."

► Make a plan together

Refer to the list of questions you prepared to help guide the conversation. If time is limited, focus on the questions that matter most to you.



- If your healthcare provider offers the vaccine, book an appointment to receive it.
- If you need to go to another healthcare provider, clarify the process for receiving the vaccine.
- Confirm whether you need to adjust any medications or treatment plans to safely receive any vaccines. For example, if you take an immunosuppressant, your doctor might recommend that you delay your treatment to help your immune system respond to the vaccine.
- Ask if your healthcare provider has any resources to learn more about vaccines.

► Write it down

Appointments can feel overwhelming. Take notes during your visit so you can remember your healthcare provider's recommendations later.

You can also ask to record the conversation or use an AI notetaker, if allowed. If you have a support person with you, they can help take notes too.

Short on time?

Focus on your top 2-3 questions. You can always book another visit to cover the rest.

After the conversation



Keep personal records: Record the dates of vaccination and make a note of when you are due for booster doses.



Report vaccines to your providers: If you receive a vaccine, be sure to inform other members of your healthcare team. This ensures your medical records are up to date.



This resource was developed in partnership with people who have lived experience.

immunocompromised.ca

