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Covid-19 vaccination: Advice from NICaN oncologists and haematologists. 31Jan 2021.

This leaflet is intended to address questions that people undergoing treatment for cancer have asked at our clinics about the Covid-19 vaccines.

The government recommends that people who are at higher risk of becoming seriously ill due to COVID-19 infection should have the vaccine. Certain categories of patients have been prioritised to be offered the vaccine. This includes people with lowered immunity due to disease such as cancer, and due to treatment, such as, chemotherapy or radiotherapy. It also includes people affected by blood cancer (such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma).

In Northern Ireland two types of COVID-19 vaccine have been approved for use and we expect others to be approved soon. They both require two doses to provide the best protection. If offered a Covid vaccine, you should have no concerns about which vaccine is offered. **We have no concerns about people who are receiving chemotherapy, immunotherapy, targeted therapy or radiotherapy having their Covid-19 vaccination.**

Some people with cancer and blood disorders have lowered immunity and might not respond as well as others to vaccination. At present, there is no information on how well people with lowered immunity respond to the COVID-19 vaccines. However, there are no particular safety concerns about using the vaccines in people with lowered immunity. The vaccines are **not** live and cannot cause infections.

When to have the vaccine: Do not have your vaccine on the same day as cytotoxic chemotherapy, proteasome inhibitors or first dose T-VEC treatment. If you are not sure what type of treatment you are receiving please ask your treating team who will be able to advise you.

After the vaccine: It is not uncommon for some people to have a temperature after the vaccine. However it is important that if you are on chemotherapy treatment that you do not ignore a high temperature. If you have a temperature or shivering flu-like symptoms **contact your local cancer unit helpline.** You will have received this number on an alert card when your cancer treatment started. Inform them that you have had your Covid-19 vaccine. They will ask you a series of questions and give you advice or arrange for you to have a medical review at your nearest hospital

After having the vaccine, it is important to carry on taking appropriate measures to reduce your risk of infection these include; practise social distancing, wear a face covering, wash your hands carefully and frequently and follow the current guidance www.nidirect.gov.uk/coronavirus.

Talk to your consultant, clinical nurse specialist, or GP if you have any concerns about the vaccine and what it means for you. If you have not heard from your local vaccination centre, or GP by the start of March 2021 please contact your general practice about the vaccine.

Useful information

- Please also refer to the leaflet: **Covid 19 Vaccination a guide for adults** available on the PHA website <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/covid-19-vaccination-guide-adults>. This leaflet will also be available in GP surgeries and pharmacies. PHA also provides a useful question and answer section on their website (search [COVID-19 Vaccination Programme questions and answers](#)).
- See also NICaN: <https://nican.hscni.net/> for updates to Covid-19 information.