



To The Patient,

As you are likely aware, AstraZeneca and Pfizer COVID-19 (Coronavirus) vaccines have been approved for use in Australia, and the COVID-19 vaccination program has now commenced in South Australia. COVID-19 vaccination will be a free and voluntary service available to all Australians in a 'phased roll out' plan. The national COVID-19 vaccination rollout prioritises vulnerable/high risk individuals and those working in front line settings for vaccination first.

We understand that people living with cancer are eager to know if, when, and how they might be given access to the COVID-19 vaccine. In line with both national and international recommendations, Adelaide Oncology and Haematology advises that individuals living with cancer receive the vaccine as it is made available to them.

We will continue to be guided by recommendations from the Australian Government and SA Health as to when and how our patients and staff will access the vaccine, but anticipate that people with cancer will be prioritised into '**Group 1b**' for vaccination.

As state based execution plans continue to be finalised we strongly encourage you to stay up to date by visiting SA Health's website

<https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/conditions/infectious+diseases/covid-19/vaccine/getting+vaccinated/getting+vaccinated>

Cancer specific information and guidance can be found on Cancer Australia's Website

<https://www.canceraustralia.gov.au/covid-19-vaccine-and-cancer>

To assist in answering any questions you may have regarding the COVID-19 vaccine we have compiled the attached 'FAQ' list. If you have any further questions or concerns please consult with your GP or Specialist at your next appointment. Alternatively, you can contact our clinic on 8463 2500 and ask to speak with our Practice Nurse.

Regards,

The Team at Adelaide Oncology and Haematology

FAQs

Can I have the COVID-19 Vaccine if I have a Cancer diagnosis?

Yes, Public Health experts and Cancer Specialists agree that patients living with Cancer should be offered the coronavirus vaccine

Is it safe to have the COVID-19 Vaccine if I am currently receiving chemotherapy?

Chemotherapy often results in reduced immune function. This can be a problem with certain types of vaccines called 'live' vaccines. The Pfizer and Oxford/Astra Zeneca Covid-19 vaccines are not 'live' vaccines.

It is possible that the vaccines may be slightly less effective for people having chemotherapy or other cancer treatments, however it is still expected that the vaccine will give useful protection against the virus.

What about Other cancer treatments?

The Covid-19 Vaccine can be given to people who are receiving or who have received radiotherapy as part of their treatment.

The Covid-19 Vaccine can be given to people who are having hormonal therapies as part of their treatment (e.g. people with breast or prostate cancer).

Experts on cancer immunotherapy have recommended that people on immunotherapy should receive the Covid-19 Vaccine. They can also be given to people who are receiving or who have received targeted therapies (including antibody treatments) as part of their therapy.

If you have had a stem-cell transplant your healthcare team can talk to you about the best time for you to have

When should I be getting the Vaccine?

Timing and availability of the vaccine will largely be governed by The Department of Health's roll out strategy.

The vaccine can be given before, during or after cancer treatment.

If you are currently receiving anti-cancer treatment please liaise with your specialist regarding when might be the best time to schedule your vaccination.

There are two vaccines approved for use in Australia - can I choose which one I receive?

Clinical trials for the Pfizer and Astra Zeneca vaccines have shown both these vaccines are effective in preventing the development of COVID-19 as well as protecting against severe disease.

Specific vaccines will be administered based on availability and subject to any determination made by the TGA.

Will I still need to worry about Personal Protective Measures?

People living with cancer, and particularly those currently receiving anti-cancer treatment may not mount as robust an immune response to the vaccines. It is strongly recommended that those patients, as well as their close contacts continue to adhere to Government recommendations regarding protective measures - including hand washing, mask wearing and social distancing.

SOURCES:

UK Chemotherapy Board; Clinician Frequently Asked Questions and Guidance on COVID-19 Vaccine for Patients Receiving Systematic Anti-Cancer Therapy, Vers 2.1, 2021.

ASCO; COVID-19 Vaccine and Patients with Cancer, 2/11/2021

MSK; COVID-19 Vaccine Interim Guidelines for Cancer Patients, Vers 4, 2021

Cancer Australia; Cancer and Covid Vaccines, <https://www.canceraustralia.gov.au/covid-19-vaccine-and-cancer>, accessed 22/2/21.

Australian Department on Health; Which COVID Vaccine will I receive? <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/getting-vaccinated-for-covid-19/which-covid-19-vaccine-will-i-receive>, Accessed 22/2/21

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<https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/conditions/infectious+diseases/covid-19/vaccine/covid-19+vaccinations>, Accessed 22/2/21