



For attention of GP practices and hospitals: Third vaccine dose for blood cancer patients

The UK government and NHS has announced that adults and children aged 12+ who are severely immunosuppressed should get a third covid vaccine dose. **This is different from the national booster programme.**

On 2 September, NHS England sent a [letter to GP practices and hospital teams](#) about this. After several weeks of patients struggling to book their jabs, NHS England sent updated letters:

- [Letter from NHSE to all GPs about third doses](#) (sent 30 September)
- [Letter from NHSE to hospitals about third doses](#) (sent 30 September)

People with blood cancer (even those who aren't having treatment) should be offered a third dose to give as much protection as possible.

This is different from the national booster programme, so patients will need your help to book their third doses.

Research shows that people with all types of blood cancer are at very high risk from covid, and that many people with blood cancer don't respond as well to the first two doses of the vaccine as other people (see bloodcancer.org.uk/vaccine-efficacy).

Blood cancers include:

- Leukaemia
- Lymphoma
- Myeloma
- MDS (myelodysplastic syndrome)
- MPN (myeloproliferative neoplasms)
- Essential thrombocythaemia (ET)
- Polycythaemia vera (PV)
- Myelofibrosis

The Green Book lists conditions that constitute severe immunosuppression, including blood cancers, even when no active treatment is being given. It also states "this list is not exhaustive" and "the prescriber should apply clinical judgment".



People in remission from blood cancer

The Green Book also states that the following groups get the third dose. This relates to people who no longer have blood cancer (are cured):

- finished treatment within the last 12 months
- had a stem cell transplant (autologous or allogenic) in the last 24 months
- had treatment longer ago, but have GvHD or immunosuppression.

Again, The Green Book states “this list is not exhaustive”.

For those in remission beyond 12 months, if there’s a chance their immune system remains impaired, they should also have a third dose.

Evidence

Research shows that many people with blood cancer, on and off treatment, do not respond to the first two vaccine doses as well as other people. But there is evidence to suggest a third dose may improve this.

Blood cancer affects the immune system. So if you have any patients with any type of blood cancer, or a history of blood cancer, we would recommend offering a third vaccine dose to give the best protection possible for this vulnerable group.

Support from Blood Cancer UK

If you have any patients affected by blood cancer, you can signpost them to Blood Cancer UK. Our support line is free to call on [0808 2080 888](tel:08082080888) or email support@bloodcancer.org.uk Our website has up-to-date information about blood cancer and coronavirus at bloodcancer.org.uk

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