

COVID-19 vaccination for patients with haematological malignancies and bone marrow failure – information for general practitioners

Version 1

Date: 16 / February / 2021

Patients who have had a haematological cancer or bone marrow failure disorder are particularly prone to severe illness and complications of COVID-19 and have an increased risk of dying due to this disease. As vaccination against this coronavirus is now available, we are providing the following advice taken from expert opinions on the indications for and safety of current vaccines.

Summary statement:

We strongly recommend that all patients with underlying haematological cancers or bone marrow failure disorders are vaccinated against the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus to protect them against severe COVID-19 disease.

Administration of COVID-19 vaccination

Although clinical trials of the vaccines did not specifically include patients with underlying haematological cancers/bone marrow failure disorders, international expert consensus is that administration of *any* of the available vaccines is safe in these patients.

- Due to the complexity of their conditions, we are advising patients who are on (immunosuppressive) treatment for these conditions to contact their local haematology department.
- We also advise GPs to contact the haematology teams managing respective patients to discuss scheduling vaccination for individual patients. There is agreement for delivering both vaccinations at a shorter interval than the current general population recommendations (<12 weeks) in patients with haematological malignancies/bone marrow failure disorders who are commencing treatment. Given the considerable variability in patients' treatment pathways according to their underlying diagnoses, discussion with the treating haematology team regarding vaccine scheduling is necessary.
- For those patients on "watch and wait" treatment pathways, vaccination can be scheduled as soon as possible and without further discussion with the haematology department.
- Those patients who are more than 3 months from their last chemotherapy / immunosuppressive treatment, may also proceed to vaccination as soon as possible (and without need to routinely discuss with their haematology department).
- Patients who have had haematopoietic stem cell transplant may wish to liaise with their haematology teams for extra advice and reassurance based on current transplant consensus before proceeding to vaccination.

What extra precautions are needed in haemato-oncology patients undergoing COVID-19 vaccination?

- Anaemia, neutropenia and thrombocytopenia (if platelets are $\geq 20 \times 10^9/L$) are not contraindications to vaccination. A platelet count of $\geq 20 \times 10^9/L$ should have been confirmed with a repeat blood test within a week of the vaccination
- Additional pressure should be applied to the vaccine site for around 5 minutes after intramuscular injection in patients with platelet count less than $50 \times 10^9/L$ who undergo vaccination
- Patients with platelet count $< 20 \times 10^9/L$ should have input and advice from their treating haematology team, who would be able to arrange platelet transfusion if appropriate, before they go ahead with vaccination

Version 1

Date: 16 / February / 2021