



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

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

This is crucial to protect those at the highest risk of illness and death from coronavirus.

GPs and hospital teams have been asked to identify these patients and arrange third doses. See [this letter to all GPs and CCGs in England](#).

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”.

**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](http://bloodcancer.org.uk/vaccine-efficacy)).

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

Blood cancers include:

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

The World Health Organisation has classified MPN as cancer since 2008.



## **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](mailto:support@bloodcancer.org.uk) Our website has up-to-date information about blood cancer and coronavirus at [bloodcancer.org.uk](http://bloodcancer.org.uk)

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