

COVID-19: information for solid organ transplant recipients

UPDATED: March 6, 2023

COVID-19 continues to circulate in British Columbia. BC Transplant and the transplant clinical teams strongly recommend getting fully vaccinated and boosted against COVID-19.

If you test positive for COVID-19, please let your transplant team know. Transplant recipients are among the patient groups who have priority access to COVID-19 treatments in BC.

Transplant recipients are also strongly advised to get a flu shot, which is free for everyone in BC. Check immunizebc.ca/clinics for locations and times. You can receive a flu vaccine at the same time as a COVID-19 vaccine, if that is easier for you.

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1. Getting vaccinated

All pre- and post-transplant patients are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated against COVID-19, and get vaccine boosters as they become available.

A complete primary vaccine series for solid organ transplant recipients involves **three doses** of COVID-19 vaccine. Three doses of vaccine offer better protection for people who are immunocompromised. A three-dose series is safe and recommended for transplant recipients who have never been vaccinated. If you were vaccinated before your transplant, you may have only received two doses and that is acceptable.

Transplant recipients (5 years and up) may have also received a booster dose of COVID-19 vaccine approximately six months after the third dose of the primary vaccine series and a 2022 fall booster at this point.

Spring 2023 Boosters

Starting in the spring of 2023, an additional booster will be available for those who are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19. Transplant recipients age 18 years of age and older are strongly encouraged to get the booster when notified. This may be your sixth dose. The preferred booster continues to be the bivalent vaccine.

If you are registered in the provincial system, you will receive a notice 6 months after your last vaccine dose.

If you recently had COVID-19, you should wait at least three months to get your booster.

Register with www.getvaccinated.gov.bc.ca to be notified when to book each vaccine dose.

The BCCDC has the most current information about [getting a vaccine](#).

2. COVID-19, vaccines and transplant recipients

- **Vaccination against COVID-19 provides transplant recipients the best protection against serious illness.** People who have been vaccinated are much less likely to end up in hospital with COVID-19 than people who have not been vaccinated. Preventing serious outcomes is the main goal of vaccination.
- Recipients of three or four mRNA COVID-19 vaccine doses receive much better protection against infection with the Omicron variant than those who received only two doses.
- Getting COVID-19 and keeping up with COVID-19 vaccinations can reduce your risk of another infection with a similar variant for at least six months. However COVID-19 vaccination might also offer better protection than getting sick with COVID-19.
- Because reinfection is possible and COVID-19 can cause severe medical complications, **even if you have already had COVID-19, it is still recommended that you continue to get your COVID-19 vaccines.** You should wait for at least 3 months after infection before getting your next dose.

You will still need to be vigilant and continue to assess your own level of risk tolerance for choosing activities and interactions within the guidelines set out by Public Health. The [BCCDC's Personal Toolkit](#) is a good resource for considering what tools to use and when for preventing COVID-19 (<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks>).



3. COVID-19 treatments for transplant recipients

Transplant recipients are among the patient groups who have priority access to COVID-19 treatments in BC. The **medications should be started within five to seven days** of experiencing signs and symptoms of infection. You will also need a positive COVID-19 test to be eligible.

- If you develop [cold or flu-like symptoms](#), you should get tested for COVID-19 as soon as possible (rapid antigen or PCR).
- If you test positive, contact your transplant care team as soon as possible. They will determine if you might benefit from available treatments.
- If you are eligible, the preferred, most effective and safer treatment (Remdesivir) for transplant patients requires three days of intravenous (IV) infusions at a health authority infusion facility. Your transplant care team will work with the health authority where you live to ensure you receive it.

- Paxlovid is an oral COVID-19 treatment available in BC; however, it is **not recommended for transplant patients** because it interacts with transplant medications.

This document is current as of March 6, 2023. Check the BC Transplant or the BCCDC website for the most current available information and updates.