

## COVID-19: Information for solid organ transplant recipients

**UPDATED: Apr 4, 2024**

COVID-19 continues to circulate in British Columbia. BC Transplant and the transplant clinical teams strongly recommend patients get fully vaccinated and receive an additional vaccine dose against COVID-19 starting in spring 2024.

**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.

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### 1. Getting vaccinated

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

#### Primary Series

A complete primary vaccine series for solid organ transplant recipients aged 5 years and up involves **two doses** of an **XBB.1.5** COVID-19 vaccine (Individuals who began their primary series with non-XBB.1.5 COVID-19 vaccines will continue to receive a three-dose primary series). Instead of one dose, two doses of an XBB.1.5 COVID-19 vaccine offer better protection for people who are immunocompromised, and is safe and recommended for transplant recipients who have never been vaccinated. If you were vaccinated before your transplant, you may have only received one dose of an XBB.1.5 COVID-19 vaccine and that is acceptable.

A complete primary vaccines series for transplant recipients aged 6 months to under 5 years involves **three doses** of an XBB.1.5 COVID-19 Moderna SPIKEVAX vaccine, or **four doses** of an XBB.1.5 Pfizer BioNTech COMIRNATY vaccine.

#### Additional Doses

Transplant recipients (age 6 months and up) may have also received additional doses of COVID-19 vaccine starting approximately six months after their primary vaccine series.

An additional vaccine dose starting in the spring of 2024 is expected to increase protection against SARS-CoV-2 infection and COVID-19 symptomatic and severe disease that has waned since the last COVID-19 vaccination or SARS-CoV-2 infection. **It is highly recommended to get an additional COVID-19 vaccine dose this spring 2024.**

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends patients to wait at least 6 months after their last dose to get another dose. However, a shorter interval of at least 3 months (i.e., a

minimum interval of 3 months) has not been shown to pose a safety risk and may be used to support program implementation (including timing of the spring campaign relative to previous and future fall campaigns).

If you recently had COVID-19, you should wait at least six months to get your additional COVID-19 vaccine dose.

Register with [www.getvaccinated.gov.bc.ca](http://www.getvaccinated.gov.bc.ca) or the BC Vaccine Line (call 1-833-838-2323) 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

- Solid organ transplant recipients continue to be at risk of severe diseases from COVID-19. If you did not receive an additional dose in fall 2023, we **strongly recommend** getting an additional COVID-19 vaccine dose this spring so you are protected. This is in line with the latest guidance from NACI (dated Jan 12, 2024), which strongly **recommends an additional dose of COVID-19 vaccine starting in the spring of 2024 for those individuals 6 months of age and older who are moderately to severely immunocompromised and previously vaccinated against COVID-19. The XBB.1.5 COVID-19 vaccines continue to be the recommended products for unvaccinated and previously vaccinated individuals and will help protect against the latest variants.** Recipients of three or four mRNA COVID-19 vaccine doses receive much better protection against infection than those who had only two doses.
- The spring dose continues to cover more recent variants and is the same as that offered in the fall. Individuals vaccinated with the updated formulation are expected to derive benefit from a better immune response against these variants compared to older vaccines.
- Individuals who did not receive a recommended dose of an XBB.1.5 COVID-19 vaccine in the fall are especially urged to get a dose this spring.
- Even if you have previously been infected, **protection against infection will decrease over time.** There are no known safety risks with receiving a vaccine after a recent SARS-CoV-2 infection.
- COVID-19 vaccination of solid organ transplant recipients helps reduce their risk of severe disease that could potentially result in hospitalization and death.



- 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 B.C. 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 B.C.; however, it is **not recommended for transplant patients** because it interacts with transplant medications.

*This document is current as of April 4, 2024. Check the BC Transplant or the BCCDC website for the most current available information and updates.*