

Vaccines and Lupus

Vaccines help protect against serious infections like the flu or pneumonia by imitating an infection and safely developing immunity to the pathogen (bacteria or virus that causes disease) targeted by the vaccine. Vaccines for specific diseases cause the immune system to produce cells that will learn and remember how to fight that disease when you are exposed to it in the future.ⁱ

The following answers commonly asked questions about vaccines with information from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the “nation’s health protection agency.”

Why are vaccines important?

Vaccines are among the best public health measures ever developed. They have greatly reduced the numbers of adults, children and infants who develop and could die from serious infectious diseases. Vaccines are important to protect the person who gets the vaccine and helps prevent spreading diseases to others.ⁱⁱ

Will I get sick from a vaccine?

The vaccine imitates a very mild version of an infection, but rarely causes illness. Sometimes you might get minor symptoms such as a fever but this is a sign that the body is building up immunity to the disease.ⁱⁱⁱ

Do vaccines cause side effects?

Like any medication, vaccines can cause side effects, but serious side effects are very rare. For most people, side effects are mild such as soreness at the spot where a shot was given.^{iv}

How long does it take for the vaccine to work?

It usually it takes a few weeks for the body to produce enough cells that protect against infection. That’s why it is possible that a person can be infected just before or soon after being vaccinated because the vaccine has not had enough time to provide protection.^v

Are vaccines safe?

Vaccines are tested carefully in clinical trials before the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will approve them for use. The FDA also inspects the manufacturing plants where the vaccine will be produced to make sure strict guidelines are followed. Even after a vaccine is approved, the FDA and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) monitor the vaccines’ use to detect any long-term safety concerns.^{vi}

Why are vaccines recommended for people who are immunocompromised such as people with lupus?

The CDC recommends specific vaccines to protect people who are at greatest risk for illness, including people with chronic conditions and weakened immune systems. Lupus lowers the immune system’s ability to fight infections.^{vii}



What vaccines can people with lupus take?

The CDC recommends talking with your doctor about vaccines, particularly because lupus lowers the immune system's ability to fight off infections like the flu. Many are safe, but people with lupus should never take vaccines that contain live viruses.

The following vaccines are recommended by the CDC for people with lupus:

- The injectable flu shot
- Pneumonia vaccine
- Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine
- Tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis (Td/Tdap) vaccine

There are other vaccines that appear safe for lupus patients and may be recommended by your physician.^{viii}

[Click here](#) to visit the CDC website for more information about vaccines.

i Understanding how vaccines work. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
ii Six things you need to know about vaccines. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
iii Understanding how vaccines work. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
iv Six things you need to know about vaccines. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
v Understanding how vaccines work. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
vi Six things you need to know about vaccines. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
vii Six things you need to know about vaccines. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
viii Managing Lupus. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.