



COVID-19 AND CANCER

Additional Covid-19 Vaccine Information for Patients with Cancer

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TRANSCRIPT

Lastly, I was asked to talk about the most recent COVID-19 vaccination recommendations for patients with cancer. So I'm just going to briefly review current recommendations from the NCCN or National Comprehensive Cancer Network. I want to stress that the guidelines that I show here are for patients who are immunocompromised. The NCCN defines a patient as immunocompromised if they are being actively treated for tumors or blood cancer, they've received cancer treatment in the past year, they've had an organ or stem cell transplant, or they're taking medicines to suppress the immune system for another condition. Additional definitions for immunocompromised patients includes having an immunodeficiency condition or an advanced or untreated HIV infection, and taking high-dose steroids or other drugs that suppress the immune system.

So, really, the first three bullet points that I bolded here are going to apply to most of our patients with cancer. So, as many of you are aware, we do now have COVID boosters available, and I wanted to briefly review the guidance surrounding these booster shots. So, cancer patients who have previously received a two-dose or a three-dose primary series and boosting are now eligible to receive an additional one booster, the bivalent booster, if they meet the following guidelines: they have to be 12 years old or older for the Pfizer vaccination, and at least 18 years old for the Moderna vaccination.

Patients are eligible to receive a bivalent booster vaccination two months after full vaccination. Again, I'm going to say it's two months after you finished your full vaccination series. And this is really important to note, what does bivalent booster vaccination mean? Well, up until now, the COVID-19 booster shots were monovalent or univalent. So, what that means is that they only contained one version of the mRNA sequence for the COVID virus spike protein. Specifically, it was the one that came from the original strain, which emerged in late 2019 in Wuhan, China. And the boosters that just recently got approved are now called bivalent vaccines, so that means that they contain the mRNA sequence for the spike protein of two strains of COVID; so the original strain from Wuhan, but then also now the more current predominant subvariant of Omicron BA.5.



These boosters have been shown to improve immune responses against the Omicron strains and people with full immune systems. However, the NCCN still supports this recent approval, but we're still awaiting the full data on bivalent booster effectiveness in immunocompromised patients. Lastly, I wanted to make a comment here that per current recommendations, it is okay to mix and match a vaccine booster, meaning if you completed the Pfizer series, initially, and you only have the Moderna booster available to you, it is okay to mix and match in that sense, as long as the patient is eligible for the vaccine that is preferred.

So this really concludes my talk. Here are some helpful resources and references I used to put together my presentation. I want to say that I wish you all well, and please stay safe during your cancer care journey, and thank you so much for your time.