

Information resources for families

Immunisations after cancer treatment has finished

Before being diagnosed with cancer, many children will have had most, or all, of the immunisations recommended as part of the government-funded National Immunisation Program. However, your child will need boosters of these immunisations after their treatment for cancer has been completed. They may also need to catch up on those missed while on treatment.

When should immunisations be given after cancer treatment?

Booster immunisations usually start six months after your child's cancer treatment has finished. Re-immunisation may take place over several visits, depending on the vaccines recommended. The immunisations they need will depend on their age and the immunisations they had before starting cancer treatment.

If your child has had a haematopoietic stem cell transplant they will need a complete immunisation course. Your oncologist will recommend when it is safe for your child to commence immunisations. This is usually around six months after the transplant, but may vary depending on your child's wellbeing and any medications they are taking. The modified 'live virus' vaccines such as measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) and varicella (chickenpox) are usually not recommended until one to two years after your transplant (please check with your oncologist).

Exactly what immunisations are needed?

Booster doses of all the vaccines currently available on the Australian National Immunisation Program schedule are needed. You can find information about the recommended immunisations from your GP, your oncologist or the immunisation centre at your hospital.

Where can I get the immunisations?

Your child's oncologist will usually organise immunisations at one of your follow-up appointments or with your GP.

Does my child need any special immunisations to travel overseas?

Your child may need extra vaccinations before travelling overseas. The best time to travel overseas is after your child has completed all their recommended immunisations, which may be some months after treatment is finished. You must discuss any travel plans with your oncologist.

Your oncologist, together with a paediatric travel doctor, will be able to give you more information on when it is safe to travel and what immunisations you need.

Who to contact for further questions

Talk to your oncologist if you have any questions about your child's or your family's immunisations. You can also contact the immunisation clinic at your hospital.