

IBD and the COVID Vaccine

Beth Israel
Lahey Health 

Should I get the COVID-19 vaccine if I have IBD?

Yes. We recommend all patients with IBD to be vaccinated as soon as they are able to receive the vaccine

Is it safe to get the COVID-19 vaccine if I have IBD?

Yes. The COVID-19 vaccines are NOT live vaccines and are safe for patients with Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis, regardless of their treatment. Although, there have not been studies specifically looking at patients with IBD, the coronavirus vaccines have been extensively tested

Can the COVID-19 vaccine give me COVID-19?

No. You cannot contract COVID-19 from the vaccine.

Can the COVID-19 vaccine cause a flare of my IBD?

No. While patients with immune conditions (including IBD) were excluded from the COVID 19 vaccine clinical development programs, there are reassuring data from studies of patients with IBD receiving other commonly used vaccinations. All the data we have from other vaccines shows us that people with IBD are not at any increased risk of side effects

Please contact your GI provider if you develop symptoms of a Crohn's or ulcerative colitis flare after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

Is one vaccine better than the other for my IBD?

No. We recommend you get whichever vaccine becomes available to you first. Aside from age difference, there is no target population better suited to one vaccine or the other. Currently the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is authorized for ages ≥ 16 years, and the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccine is authorized for ages ≥ 18 years.

When can I receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

Please refer to state guidelines. We encourage you to work with your primary care provider and keep up to date on state guidelines about when and how your COVID-19 vaccine may be available.

Should I schedule my vaccine at a certain time? Should I stop my medication before, during, or after the vaccination?

We recommend you consider timing of the vaccine to your current medication, specifically those on anti-TNF therapy and biologics to avoid confusion with side effects related to your IBD medication. We are currently recommending you do not have the vaccine 2 days prior to a scheduled infusion as you may have mild side effects from the vaccine. Similarly, we are encouraging patients not take injectable medications on the day of or day after vaccination.

You should not stop or delay treatment as this may lead to a flare of your Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis,.

Keep in mind the Pfizer vaccine requires a second shot at ~ 21 days and Moderna at ~ 28 days. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is currently a single dose. You should ideally wait 14 days between the coronavirus vaccine and any other vaccination because in the very rare circumstance that you have an allergic reaction, it will be important to tell which vaccine has caused it.

I heard the COVID-19 vaccine could be less effective if I'm on a certain medication. Is this true?

It is unknown if certain medications including corticosteroids (ex. prednisone), immunomodulators (ex. azathioprine, 6-MP, methotrexate), biologics (adalimumab, infliximab,

ustekinumab, vedolizumab), and/or tofacitinib may decrease vaccine efficacy. Even if this were to be the case, a reduced immune response to a vaccine does not mean a vaccine is ineffective. There have been no studies or formal recommendations to provide additional booster doses when taking these medications.

The benefits of vaccination, even in patients treated with the previously mentioned medications, outweigh these theoretical concerns.

Do I need the vaccine if I've had COVID-19 already?

Yes. It is not known how long immunity from COVID-19 lasts, and it may be possible get COVID-19 more than once.

Do I still need to take precautions after receiving the COVID-19 vaccination?

Yes. Continue to follow state guidelines regarding mask and social distancing policies following vaccination.

Should I get the COVID-19 vaccine if I have IBD and I am pregnant or breastfeeding?

While there have been no specific studies in these groups, there is no contraindication to the vaccine for pregnant or breastfeeding women. Please discuss vaccination with your OB-GYN.

References:

- <https://gut.bmj.com/content/early/2021/01/20/gutjnl-2020-324000>
- [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langas/article/PIIS2468-1253\(21\)00024-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langas/article/PIIS2468-1253(21)00024-8/fulltext)
- <https://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/coronavirus/vaccines>
- <https://www.uchicagomedicine.org/forefront/coronavirus-disease-covid-19/coronavirus-covid19-information-for-patients-with-inflammatory-bowel-disease>
- <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response-counterterrorism-and-emerging-threats/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>