

## About Immunizations

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Kidney transplantation involves the use of immunosuppressants. These medications are effective because they work by reducing inflammation by manipulating the body's immune system. Because of this activity, the susceptibility to infections may be increased. However, many of these infections can be prevented by utilizing appropriate immunization strategies.

## Live Vaccines

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Live bacterial or viral vaccines should be avoided if you are on an immunosuppressant due to the risk of vaccine related infections.

## Vaccinations to Avoid

Varicella  
Yellowfever  
MMR

## Resources

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HealthLink BC

[www.healthlinkbc.ca/Immunization.stm](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/Immunization.stm)

BC Centre for Disease Control

[www.bccdc.ca/imm-vac/](http://www.bccdc.ca/imm-vac/)

# Vaccinations

Is your health up-to-date?

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An Overview of  
Immunizations and  
Recommendations  
for Patients on  
Immunosuppressants

## **Influenza Vaccination (The Flu Vaccine)**

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This immunization helps protect against the seasonal flu. Because the flu virus is always changing, these vaccines are updated yearly. It is recommended to obtain this vaccine once a year.

\*Please note that the flu vaccine given as a nasal spray (Flumist) contains a live flu virus and is therefore contraindicated.

## **Pneumococcal Polysaccharide (PPV) Vaccine**

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This immunization helps protect against meningitis, pneumonia and blood infections. It is recommended if you are on an immunosuppressant.

## **Hepatitis B Vaccination**

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This vaccine protects against hepatitis B. Vaccination involves a series of 3 injections over at least 4 months. For those who have not received the vaccination series, it is recommended for individuals with risk factors for hepatitis B which will include travelers, high-risk sexual behaviour and healthcare providers.

## **Meningococcal Vaccine**

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In general, individuals on immunosuppressants are not considered at an increased risk for meningococemia. However, this vaccination should be considered for individuals who are first-year college students living in a dormitory.

## **Tetanus**

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The Tetanus toxoid (Td) vaccine is part of the recommended childhood immunizations and a booster shot is given every 10 years thereafter. Although a tetanus infection is rare, it should be administered as scheduled in all individuals.

## **HPV**

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The vaccines Cervarix and Gardasil help protect against the human papillomavirus that causes cervical cancer. Gardasil also protects against some viruses that cause genital warts.

Vaccination involves a series of 3 injections over a 6-month period. Women with inflammatory bowel disease have a higher risk of HPV and abnormal Pap smears. It is recommended that all women between the ages of 14-26 obtain this vaccination.