



NATIONAL KIDNEY
FOUNDATION®

Vaccines and Your Kidneys and Heart



Vaccines protect you from serious illnesses

Vaccines help your body fight off diseases like the flu, tetanus, hepatitis B, COVID-19, shingles, and pneumonia. Getting vaccinated can keep you from getting very sick if you do catch one of these illnesses.

Vaccines are very important for people with chronic kidney disease (CKD), those who are on dialysis, and people who have a weakened immune system (immunosuppressed), such as people with a kidney transplant. Vaccines can help prevent serious infections and keep you healthier. If you are on dialysis or have a kidney transplant, you may need a higher dose, extra doses, or a blood test to check that a vaccine worked. Your healthcare team can tell you what is right for you.



Protect your kidneys and heart

Your heart and kidneys are two important organs in your body. They work together to keep you healthy. Your kidneys filter waste and extra fluid from your blood. Your heart pumps that clean blood through your body.

Your heart can affect the health of your kidneys, and your kidneys can affect the health of your heart. When one is affected, the other is too. When you have kidney disease, your body has to work harder, putting extra strain on your heart and blood vessels. In fact, people with kidney disease are at a much higher risk for heart disease. People with kidney disease are also at higher risk of heart disease.

Treatments for kidney disease usually involves nutrition and lifestyle recommendations and medicines to help protect the kidneys and heart. Things like managing blood pressure can help the heart and kidneys.

Vaccines can also offer a layer of protection for your heart and kidneys. Certain illness like the flu and COVID-19 can strain the heart and kidneys and increase the risk of kidney disease and heart disease. A vaccine can help prevent this from happening.



Speak with your healthcare team and ask questions

You should speak with your healthcare team about vaccines and which ones you need and have an honest conversation about risks and benefits as it relates to your kidneys and heart.

Vaccines offer many benefits, such as protecting you from serious illness and protecting the heart and kidneys. However, some vaccines should be avoided. For example if you have a kidney transplant or are on immunosuppressant medications, avoid “live” vaccines (such as the nasal spray flu vaccine, MMR, or chickenpox vaccines), because your immune system cannot safely handle them. Always confirm your status with your healthcare team.

In very rare cases, some people have had myocarditis (swelling of the heart muscle) or pericarditis (swelling of the lining around the heart) after getting a COVID-19 vaccine in the United States. The CDC and Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) continue to emphasize that the benefits of getting vaccinated are much greater than the small risk of these heart problems.

Speak with your healthcare team about family about any risks and concerns you may have. Here are some questions you can ask.

- Which vaccines do I need because of my [kidney disease, dialysis, transplant, heart condition], age, or medicines?
- Can I get any vaccines at this office/clinic, during dialysis (if on dialysis) or at a local pharmacy?
- Do I need extra doses, higher doses, or blood tests to check if I am protected?
- Are there any vaccines I should avoid because of my transplant medicines or immune system?
- When should my next vaccination be scheduled?

For more information, contact the National Kidney Foundation

Toll-free help line: **855.NKF.CARES** or email: **nkfcare@kidney.org**



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