

Practice Guideline:

Infections and Vaccine Use in Multiple Sclerosis

Summary for Patients and Their Families

Experts from the American Academy of Neurology, or AAN, carefully reviewed the available scientific studies about infections and vaccine use in multiple sclerosis, or MS. The following summary highlights what their findings mean for you.

What is the key message for me?

For people with MS, preventing infections through vaccine use is a key part of medical care. If you have MS, you should receive vaccines according to the standard vaccine guidelines.

Before receiving any vaccine, talk with your doctor about any MS medicine you are using.

Terms Used in This Document

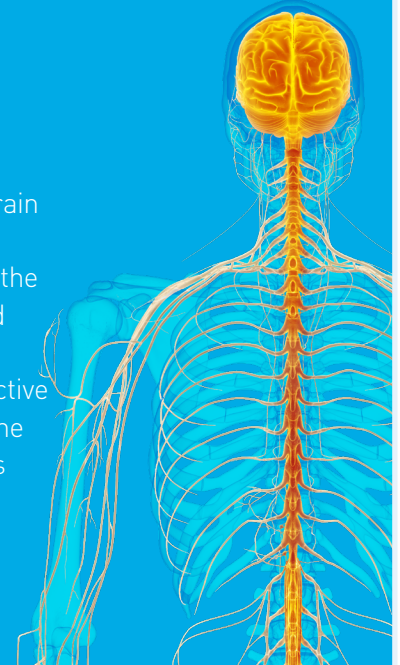
Flu—An infection caused by a virus that targets the parts of the body used in breathing. It develops faster and causes worse symptoms than the common cold.

Immune System—A set of cells, tissues, and organs that protect against substances that enter the body from outside.

Vaccine—A medicine that helps make your immune system stronger. Vaccines have small amounts of the germs that cause sickness. Your immune system fights against these germs.


What is MS?


In MS, the immune system attacks the brain and spinal cord. This damages nerves and the tissue that covers and protects nerve fibers. Damage to this protective tissue changes how the nerves deliver signals from the brain and spinal cord.




Key to Evidence Levels

After the experts review all of the published research studies, they describe the strength of the evidence as follows:

 **Strong evidence** = Future studies very unlikely to change the conclusion




 **Low evidence** = Future studies likely to change the conclusion

 **Moderate evidence** = Future studies unlikely to change the conclusion

 **Very low evidence** = Future studies very likely to change the conclusion

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What does the research say?

Measured Effect	Evidence Level of Effect
Effect of MS Medicines on Vaccines	 <p>There is some evidence that certain MS medicines may make some vaccines less effective. The strength of this evidence is low or moderate depending on the medicine used. Before receiving any vaccine, talk with your doctor about when to start and stop your MS medicines.</p>
Effect of Vaccines on MS Risk	 <p>There is some evidence that certain vaccines are not likely to increase risk of developing MS. The strength of this evidence is low or moderate depending on the vaccine type.</p>
Effect of Vaccines on MS Flares	 <p>There is not enough evidence to show that vaccine use causes MS flares to happen or get worse. The strength of the available evidence is very low. However, some experts think the MS medicines used to treat flares may lessen how effective a vaccine is. If you are having a flare, consider waiting until it has passed before receiving a vaccine.</p>

How can I know which vaccines are right for me? Are there vaccines I should always or never receive?

Unless there is a specific reason not to, you should receive the flu vaccine every year.

If you use an MS medicine, talk with your doctor about which vaccines are safe for you to receive. You may need to avoid some vaccines.

This practice guideline was endorsed by the [Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers](#) and by the [Multiple Sclerosis Association of America](#).

To learn more, go to [AAN.com/guidelines](https://www.aan.com/guidelines).


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This statement is provided as an educational service of the AAN. It is based on an assessment of current scientific and clinical information. It is not intended to include all possible proper methods of care for a neurologic problem or all legitimate criteria for choosing to use a specific procedure. It does not exclude any reasonable alternative methods. The AAN recognizes that specific patient care decisions are the right of the patient and the physician caring for the patient, based on all the circumstances involved.


The AAN develops these summaries as educational tools for neurologists, patients, family members, caregivers, and the public. You may save a single copy for your personal use. Please contact guidelines@aan.com to learn about other ways you can share this content beyond your personal use.


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