

Manifesto on the importance of vaccination for patients with chronic conditions

The European Patients' Forum, an umbrella organisation representing 72 member organisations across the European Union, calls on policymakers and other stakeholders to take into account the importance of vaccination for patients with chronic conditions.

- Infectious diseases can be more dangerous and difficult to manage in patients because of increased risks of complications, treatment interactions and adverse effects.
- Some patients, for example persons with autoimmune conditions and organ transplants, are more vulnerable to infections. Some cannot be vaccinated at all. These patients suffer from falling rates of vaccination in the general population.
- Even though specific vaccination recommendations exist in national programmes for many chronic diseases, uptake amongst patients can be low.
- One of the reasons for this is lack of awareness, linked to a lack of targeted evidence-based information in patient-friendly language. There is also some vaccine hesitancy in the patient community.
- Various barriers exist for patients to access vaccination. These include also lack of easy availability and the cost of vaccination for patients.
- There is a gap in the information available on the vaccination recommendations for specific chronic conditions. Patients say main gaps are on benefits and risks of vaccination set in context and explained in lay-friendly language, from sources that are trustworthy, comprehensive and accessible. Information on the risk of not being vaccinated is also needed.
- Healthcare professionals are key sources of information for patients, and generally trusted sources of advice.
- Patients are concerned about low uptake of vaccination among healthcare professionals. We have a role in changing attitudes, and would like to work with them to better inform and share knowledge on vaccination for adults living with chronic diseases
- National bodies and international organisations are also trusted sources of information. It is important that national health agencies, research bodies and governments publish consistent messages based on evidence-based information and actively engage with the public.
- Patient organisations play an important information and education role. They can help co-ordinate awareness campaigns on vaccination benefits and safety, working on the ground with their communities to dispel myths through translating scientific information into lay-friendly language.
- Some patient organisations are already active on the topic of vaccination; others would like to be but would need more support. Patient groups are interested particularly in collaborating with healthcare professionals' organisations and national authorities.

We call for action to improve patients' access to vaccination; provision of evidence-based, lay-friendly information on vaccination for patients; and involvement of patient organisations in shaping policies, programmes and actions on vaccination at national and European levels.

1. Robust, evidence-based information that enables people to understand and contextualise the benefits and risks of vaccination should be made available, specifically for patients with different chronic conditions. Information should be co-developed with patients. Ideally it should be available through a 'one-stop' EU-level online portal
2. Vaccination should be included as a part of chronic disease management plans and clinical guidelines.
3. Healthcare professionals should incorporate routine assessment of their adult patients' vaccination needs during all clinical encounters to ensure that patients are aware of the recommendations for needed vaccines and are either offered these vaccines or referred for vaccination.
4. In countries where patients hold a social security card, their vaccination schedule should be included in the card.
5. Healthcare professionals should be trained on the importance of vaccination and armed with the relevant scientific facts to help them communicate with patients and reinforce a trust relationship.
6. Vaccination should be regarded as a public health priority also for adults living with chronic diseases, with a long-term vision and action plan aiming to change society's perception on vaccination. Patient organisations should be seen as natural allies in such efforts and invited as partners in joint activities.
7. Low uptake of vaccination and hesitancy within healthcare professions should be tackled urgently. Patient organisations are willing to work together on this issue.
8. National institutions and authorities should collaborate with patient organisations to better understand their communities' needs and to formulate more effective information and engagement strategies.
9. Patients' barriers to vaccination in different countries, including barriers relating to availability of vaccines and the cost of vaccination, should be tackled.

For more information please visit www.eu-patient.eu/whatwedo/Policy/vaccination