

What doctors want immunocompromised patients to know during COVID, with Monique Spillman, MD



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The AMA's What Doctors Want Patients to Know™ series provides physicians with a platform to share what they want patients to understand about today's health care headlines.

AMA member Monique Spillman, MD, PhD, shares valuable information and insights for [immunocompromised patients](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Speaker

- Monique Spillman, MD, PhD, gynecologic oncologist and clinical associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Texas A&M College of Medicine

Transcript

Voice-over: We've enlisted AMA member Dr. Monique Spillman to share valuable information and insights for immunocompromised patients. During this stage of the pandemic, as mask mandates and restrictions on indoor gathering are being rolled back, here's what she wants patients to know.

Mask up in indoor spaces. We do recommend that they wear masks even if they have been vaccinated. Because we know that just because of their therapies, including chemotherapies, their immune systems can be lowered and they are more at risk of not just COVID-19 but other infectious diseases as well.

Close contacts should mask up too. Of course, sometimes that can be a very difficult conversations for our patients to have. But oftentimes, family and friends will act to protect their loved ones.

Use caution with rapid test results. Some of the tests are better than others at actually detecting disease. And someone can be asymptomatic and still have the disease and still spread it. And that test can turn positive even 12 to 24 hours later. So caution is still appropriate.

Don't rely on antibody testing alone. There are a lot of tests that purport to look at COVID-19 antibodies but they don't necessarily correlate with one another or with the risk of the disease. So, at this point I tell the patients that if they get one of those tests, it can be an important piece of information but I still recommend vaccination.

Gather outside to reduce risk. If you're in a gathering and it's possible to do that outside, of course, that's a safer option. Opening windows, getting sunshine and staying outside, that's good for everyone even independent of the pandemic.

Keep seeing your physician. As we continue to address COVID-19, I believe one of the big takeaways from this is please don't avoid your physician. We've had delayed cases of cancer diagnosis because people were simply too scared to come into the doctor's office.

Voice-over: From high cholesterol to sleep apnea and long COVID, learn what doctors want patients to know about today's health care headlines at [ama-assn.org/wish](https://patients.ama-assn.org/wish).