



CANCERcare®

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fact sheet

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM ABOUT THE CORONAVIRUS AND COVID-19

While it is always important to communicate with your treating health care team, clear and open communication is especially critical during a rapidly changing situation, such as the coronavirus pandemic. Good communication with your team of doctors, nurses, social workers and other providers will help improve the quality of your care and may also ease some of your concerns and anxieties.

How will the coronavirus impact my treatment plan? As the health care system handles an increasing number of cases of COVID-19, your appointments, treatments or procedures (including surgeries) could be rescheduled or postponed indefinitely. In some cases, this may be due to hospitals reassigning oncology staff to COVID-19 units. Your facility may move some of your appointments to telemedicine visits, during which you speak with your doctor via telephone or video call from your home instead of coming to their office. Your doctor may offer alternatives for your scheduled treatment, such as moving to an oral chemotherapy regimen, if appropriate. For prescriptions administered at home, it may be helpful to explore the option of pharmacy delivery services. This situation has many unknowns, but your treating health care team will provide as much information as they can about your options and timelines to ensure you receive the best care possible under the circumstances.

What precautions is the clinic or hospital taking to minimize the risk of infection for patients and visitors? Many facilities are changing their rules regarding visitors, office consultations and how and when treatments are administered. When possible, ask about restrictions prior to an office visit. For example, the clinic may ask that you do not bring guests to your infusion appointment.

You may also notice treatment centers limiting the amount of people in and out or certain entrances being closed temporarily. If this presents issues related to your ability to walk or park, your doctor may be able to request assistance from other clinic staff. Abiding by your facility's guidelines helps protect you, your fellow patients, health care providers and other hospital or clinic employees.

How can I limit my risk, or my family's risk, of infection? Am I at a higher risk for severe complications from COVID-19? To limit exposure and risk of infection, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises avoiding crowded areas, washing hands with soap frequently and for at least 20 seconds, not touching your face and disinfecting high-contact surfaces. The use of a cloth mask over nose and mouth contributes greatly to diminishing the spread of COVID-19.

The CDC has identified high-risk groups for severe illnesses from COVID-19 as those aged 65 years and older, those living in a nursing home or long-term care facility and those with existing conditions. These include chronic lung disease, serious heart conditions, severe obesity and associated concerns like diabetes, renal failure and liver disease. Those with compromised immune systems, such as those undergoing treatment for cancer, are among those at high risk.

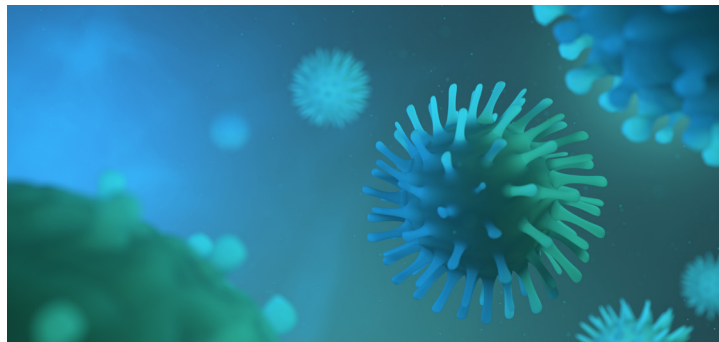
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Information about the risks from the coronavirus continues to change, so asking your doctor about your specific risks and suggested preventative measures ensures that you receive the most up-to-date information.

Who should I contact if I believe I have been exposed to the coronavirus or if I start showing symptoms of COVID-19? If you are exposed to someone who tests positive for the coronavirus or if you experience symptoms, knowing who to call is critical. Your doctor can provide you with the best office, individual or number to contact. In this situation, your treating health care team will be able to assess the situation and advise on next steps, such as testing and quarantine measures, as needed.

Are there treatments or a vaccine available for COVID-19? Doctors and scientists are continually learning more about the virus and the most effective treatments against it. Multiple drugs are being studied as possible treatments, though it is still too early to evaluate their effectiveness. Researchers around the world are working to develop a vaccine for COVID-19 and these are starting to appear in the United States and many other countries. However, the logistics involved in deploying their widespread use may take some time.

I am feeling overwhelmed. What resources are available? New information related to the coronavirus is unfolding on a daily basis. Even for those who are not coping with a diagnosis of cancer, it is common to feel overwhelmed emotionally, financially, mentally and physically by the current situation. Your doctor may have suggestions for services and programs at your treating health care facility.



In addition, CancerCare has developed resources available to help you cope, such as our fact sheet “Coping with Anxiety About the Coronavirus.” CancerCare’s master’s-prepared oncology social workers can provide emotional support through individual counseling or support groups, free of charge. Social workers can also help you access additional resources in your area. To speak with an oncology social worker, call our toll-free Hopeline at 800-813-HOPE (4673) or visit www.cancercare.org to learn more.

CancerCare® Can Help

Founded in 1944, CancerCare is the leading national organization providing free support services and information to help people manage the emotional, practical and financial challenges of cancer. Our comprehensive services include case management, counseling and support groups over the phone, online and in-person, educational workshops, publications and financial and co-payment assistance. All CancerCare services are provided by master’s-prepared oncology social workers and world-leading cancer experts.

To learn more, visit www.cancercare.org or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

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