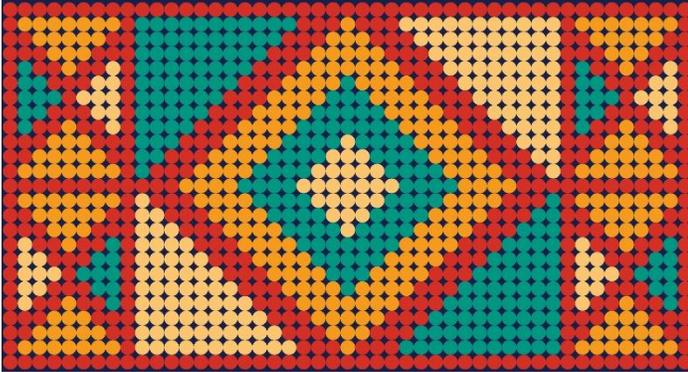


COVID-19 (2019 Novel Coronavirus)

Information for Native Cancer Patients and Survivors



Individuals with cancer or cancer survivors have a higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 due to weakened immune systems from cancer or its treatment (Fred Hutchinson, 2020; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2020a).

It is important for cancer patients, survivors, and those who are in close contact with them to take precautions.

Are all cancer patients at risk for COVID-19?

All cancer patients are at risk, but the patients most at risk are:

- People in active treatment—surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, immunotherapy—for any type of cancer.
- People who have undergone bone marrow transplants (Fred Hutchinson, 2020).
- People with a history of smoking (CDC, 2020c).
- According to Fred Hutchinson (2020), those who are immunosuppressed including those who:
 - Have low white-cell or low lymphocyte counts.
 - Are taking immune suppressive agents (such as prednisone).
 - Have been told by their healthcare provider they are immunosuppressed.

Are cancer survivors at risk of contracting COVID-19?

The after-effects of cancer and cancer treatment, such as a suppressed immune system, may be long term and do not end when people finish their last course of therapy or leave the hospital after surgery (Fred Hutchinson, 2020).

All cancer patients and survivors, whether currently in treatment or not, should talk with a doctor who understands their situation and medical history (Fred Hutchinson, 2020).

How do I keep myself safe?

To keep yourself safe:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Practice good hand hygiene and cough and sneeze etiquette.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily, such as doorknobs, light switches, handles, faucets, sinks, and cell phones.
- Stay home.
- If you must leave, practice social distancing by keeping at least 6ft between you and others.
- Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- If temperature is 100.4* or higher, call your doctor.
- Plan how you will take care of sick family members. Make plans for childcare if you are sick or if your child is sick.
- Prepare for medical needs. Be sure to have medicines to treat fever or other symptoms in case you get sick.
- Talk with your doctor about getting extra necessary prescription medication.
- Stay informed—check the CDC website regularly for new updates (coronavirus.gov) (Richardson, 2020).

What do I do if I think I got sick?

If you have any of the symptoms of an infection, COVID-19 or otherwise, then take the following steps:

- **Call ahead** before going to the doctor or any health clinic (CDC, 2020b).
- Separate yourself from others – try to stay in one room and away from other people in your home. Use a separate bathroom if one is available (CDC, 2020b).
- Avoid sharing personal items such as dishes, drinking glasses, cups, utensils, towels, or bedding. After using these items, wash them thoroughly (CDC, 2020b).

Symptoms of an infection are:

- Fever (this is sometimes the only sign of an infection)
- Chills and sweats
- Change in cough or a new cough
- Sore throat or new mouth sore
- Shortness of breath
- Nasal congestion
- Stiff neck
- Burning or pain with urination
- Unusual vaginal discharge or irritation
- Increased urination
- Redness, soreness, or swelling in any area, including surgical wounds and ports
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Pain in the abdomen or rectum
- New onset of pain (CDC, 2019)

What if someone I spend time with shows symptoms consistent with COVID-19?

Avoid contact with those people, if at all possible. It is also important to not bring that family member or other persons with symptoms into the cancer patient's home if at all possible (CDC, 2020; Fred Hutchinson, 2020).

If a person showing symptoms must be in the same household, separate them from the cancer patient – try to have the cancer patient stay in one room and away from other people in the home. Use a separate bathroom if one is available (CDC, 2020b).

What about my treatment?

Infection is one of the biggest risks for cancer patients in treatment, whether it is coronavirus or the common cold. Chemotherapies and other treatments drastically weaken a cancer patient's immune system. Currently, doctors are doing everything they can to treat cancer patients while also limiting their risk for infection to coronavirus.

Talk to your doctor regarding treatment plans moving forward.

Who else can I talk to other than my doctor?

Cancer Information Specialists at National Cancer Institute Contact Center

Free service available to anyone who can discuss new coronavirus updates and how measures and updates, like social distancing, are impacting cancer treatment.

Phone: 1.800.4.CANCER

Email: NClinfo@nih.gov

Live chat: cancer.gov/contact

Hours: 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. ET

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's coronavirus self-checker to help you help you make decisions of seeking medical care.

- [Cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus)

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