

Cancer and Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Information and support regarding cancer and COVID-19

Cancer Council understands that Australians undergoing cancer treatment, cancer survivors and their families and friends may have questions in relation to the recent outbreak of Coronavirus and the illness it causes, COVID-19.

If you have cancer your immune system may not be as strong as it is normally so you may feel concerned about the risks associated with COVID-19.

Generally, people with cancer should continue to follow any specific advice or standard precautions recommended by their health care practitioners to minimise your risk of infection, during and after treatment.

Visit [cancer.org.au](https://www.cancer.org.au) for more information and if you need further assistance call Cancer Council on 13 11 20 for any cancer-related information and support.

If you are experiencing symptoms

If you are currently experiencing symptoms of infection (e.g. fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath) or are aware you have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus please contact your treatment team. Where possible obtain advice over the phone rather than attending in person to lower your risk of exposure and to reduce the risk of exposing others.

If you are undergoing cancer treatment

If you are currently undergoing treatment some practical ways to limit your risks of exposure include:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds, or if not immediately available use an alcohol-based hand rub. It's a good idea to carry this with you. It is especially important to wash your hands before eating or drinking.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth as this can transfer the virus from surfaces and increase the risk of infection.
- Avoid contact with those who are sick or unwell or have been exposed to the virus or may be at higher risk due to recent travel to a high risk country.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces (tables, benches, light switches, doorknobs, sinks, toilets, remotes, such as your mobile phone or eating surfaces). Wear gloves (disposable if possible). Clean obvious debris with soap and water. Clean with a 70% alcohol solution or a mix of 4 teaspoons of bleach per litre of water.
- Avoid crowds and crowded areas and avoid unnecessary physical contact, such as shaking hands, hugging or kissing. This is especially important if you are currently having chemotherapy or are post treatments such as bone marrow transplantation.
- Maintain a 1.5 metre physical distance between yourself and others and avoid social habits such as kissing or handshakes.
- Talk to your doctor or member of your treatment team about the times in your treatment when you may be at the highest risk of

infection so you can plan your activities accordingly. (Unfortunately, there are no shortcuts to boosting the immune system beyond adhering to a healthy lifestyle).

- Call your treatment team to see if you can do you some of your consultations remotely via phone, Skype or Facetime.
- Stay home as much as possible and avoid non-essential travel and avoid public transport if you can.

Be prepared

If you do take prescription or over-the-counter medication, make sure you have enough at home or in a safe place that you are able to access. A one month supply is ideal.

For family, friends and carers

If you have had contact with a person who could be at an increased risk of having the coronavirus, avoid any contact with the person who is receiving cancer treatment.

Talk to your health care provider about receiving the influenza vaccination as early in the flu season as possible to avoid passing on other infections and increasing the risk that you or your family member or friend will need healthcare.

Get support

If you are feeling anxious, have questions or need support, please remember that **Cancer Council's support and information line is available on 13 11 20** during business hours. Our specially trained team can provide emotional support as well as practical tips for minimising the risk of infection during this time.

Where can I get further information?

The Australian Government Department of Health has issued public health information on COVID-19 at:

www.health.gov.au/health-topics/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov

You can also contact the Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080

Or call Cancer Council on **13 11 20** for any other cancer-related information and support.

Knowledge of coronavirus and the associated illness, COVID-19, is changing rapidly as are the public health messages that keep you safe. Keep checking the Government website for updated information. We will also review this information daily.