

Information Sheet for Cancer Patients, Families and Carers on COVID-19

A companion resource to the new Clinical Guidance for Haematology and Oncology on COVID-19

(For Australia)

Date stamp: 25 March 2020

As a person living with cancer, you and your family and carers will likely be concerned about the risks surrounding the novel coronavirus and the associated illness, COVID-19 (***read more about COVID-19***).

The purpose of this information sheet is to summarise for patients with cancer a list of messages about COVID-19 recently published as clinical guidance in ***“Managing haematology and oncology patients during the COVID-19 pandemic: Interim consensus guidance”*** (*Medical Journal of Australia*, 20 March 2020). The guidance provides advice for clinicians and their healthcare teams to help their patients and support initiatives to contain, delay and prevent the spread of COVID-19. The guidance will be updated regularly over the coming weeks and months.

The new clinical guidelines on COVID-19 were written by a group of senior specialists from Australia and New Zealand – including haematologists, oncologists and infectious disease physicians – and have been endorsed by multiple organisations.

Please note that the information regarding the COVID-19 situation may change frequently, so you should remain up-to-date with information and advice from the Australian government as well as state/territory and local advice for your location. We have provided a list of international, national, state/territory governments and organisations to help you stay up-to-date (see page 3).

If you are concerned, have questions or cannot access the internet, please call the Cancer Council support and information line on **13 11 20**. If you are a young person with cancer or their carer, support is available through Canteen on **1800 835 932**.

Developed by ALLG in collaboration with:



Key messages regarding COVID-19 for patients with cancer

Based on Weinkove, et al. *Medical Journal of Australia*, 20 March 2020.

Please note that your doctor or cancer centre/clinic may provide you with information about COVID-19, which is more specific to your cancer or treatment, or which is specific for your cancer centre/clinic – this information should take priority over the general advice here.

- Any person is at possible risk of infection with the novel coronavirus. As a person living with cancer, you may be at higher risk of infection with COVID-19. This could be due to the cancer itself and/or the treatment that you are receiving.
- Preventing the spread of infection should be a high priority for you and anyone in close contact with you, including carers, family and friends. You and those in close contact with you should review, monitor, and closely adhere to recommendations from the Department of Health (Australia) or Ministry of Health (New Zealand) regarding hand hygiene, social distancing and other measures to avoid COVID-19.
- If you are a smoker, you should stop smoking.
- No vaccine for COVID-19 is available, but your doctor may recommend that you receive a vaccination against influenza (and against other infections). Depending on your situation, your doctor may recommend additional measures to help reduce your risk of other infections.
- COVID-19 can cause fevers, a dry cough, and difficulty breathing. However, these symptoms can be caused by other conditions, including other infections, and can be side effects of some cancer treatments. If you are being assessed for possible COVID-19 disease, let the doctor or nurse know about your cancer diagnosis and its treatment.
- If you have symptoms that resemble those of COVID-19, or if you have had recent contact with a person with COVID-19, please do not arrive unannounced at your cancer centre or clinic, as you could put other patients at risk. In this situation, you should first contact your doctor (or cancer centre/clinic) for directions or follow national or regional advice for people with suspected COVID-19.
- If you are seeing or speaking with a doctor or nurse (in person or via phone/internet) who is not familiar with your medical history, you should tell them about your cancer diagnosis and any current or recent treatments. It may be helpful for you to carry a copy of a recent letter from your clinic that describes your diagnosis and treatments.
- If you experience difficulty obtaining medicines due to increased demand or supply issues, contact your doctor or cancer centre/clinic; they may be able to suggest alternatives.
- Before considering domestic or overseas travel, check governmental advice, speak with your clinician, and ensure you have enough medication for your journey and any required periods. Check the restrictions of any travel or medical insurance policies carefully.
- If you are feeling concerned or distressed, please seek assistance from one or more of the resources provided (see list below).
- You can find a list of online resources related to COVID-19 on the next page. Additionally, your cancer centre/clinic may direct you to patient information resources tailored to a particular type of cancer.

References

Weinkove R, McQuilten Z, Blyth E, Cheng AC, Conyers R, Crane M, Haeusler G, Jackson C, Lane S, Mollee P, Mulligan S, Ritchie D, Ruka M, Solomon B, Szer J, Thursky K, Wood K, Worth L, Yong M, Slavin M, The B. Managing haematology and oncology patients during the COVID-19 pandemic: Interim consensus guidance. *Medical Journal of Australia*: 20 March 2020; accessed on 23 March 2020

Organisational Endorsements of Interim Guidance

- Australasian Leukaemia & Lymphoma Group (ALLG) www.allg.org.au
- Australasian Lung Cancer Trials Group <https://altg.com.au/>
- Australian and New Zealand Children's Haematology/Oncology Group <https://anzchog.org/>
- Australia and New Zealand Society of Palliative Medicine <http://www.anzspm.org.au/c/anzspm>
- Bone Marrow Transplantation Society of Australia and New Zealand <https://www.bmtsanz.org.au/>
- Cancer Society of New Zealand www.cancernz.org.nz
- Clinical Oncology Society of Australia <https://www.cosa.org.au/>
- Haematology Society of Australia and New Zealand www.hsanz.org.au
- National Centre for Infections in Cancer <https://cancerandinfections.org/>
- New Zealand Cancer Control Agency <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/national-cancer-programme/cancer-control-agency>
- New Zealand Society for Oncology <http://www.nzsoncology.org.nz/>
- Palliative Care Australia <https://palliativecare.org.au/>

List of Helpful Sites Regarding COVID-19

AUSTRALIA

- Australian Government, Department of Health and Human Services <https://www.health.gov.au/>
- General Coronavirus Information <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>
- Resources for general public <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-resources>
- Head to Health: COVID-19 online support information <https://headtohealth.gov.au/covid-19-support/covid-19>

FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS

- Information for Healthcare and Residential Care Workers <https://headtohealth.gov.au/covid-19-support/covid-19>
- Resources for Health Professionals including Pathology Providers <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-resources-for-health-professionals-including-aged-care-providers-pathology-providers-and-healthcare-managers>
- Guidance on Usage of Surgical Masks <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/03/coronavirus-covid-19-information-on-the-use-of-surgical-masks-covid-19-information-on-the-use-of-surgical-masks.pdf>
- Your affiliated professional society
 - [Haematology Society of Australia & New Zealand \(HSANZ\)](https://www.hsanz.org.au/Index.asp) <https://www.hsanz.org.au/Index.asp>
 - [Bone Marrow Transplant Society of Australia & New Zealand](https://www.bmtsanz.org.au/) <https://www.bmtsanz.org.au/>

FOR PATIENTS

- Cancer Australia – Information for those living with cancer <https://canceraustralia.gov.au/about-us/news/information-people-cancer-about-covid-19>
- Cancer Council – Information and support line **13 11 20** <https://www.cancer.org.au/cancer-and-covid-19.html>
- Leukaemia Foundation of Australia: Viruses & Blood Cancer <https://www.leukaemia.org.au/disease-information/living-with-myeloma/virus/>
- Lung Foundation Australia – Information and Support Centre **1800 654 301** <https://lungfoundation.com.au/>
- Lymphoma Australia <http://www.lymphoma.org.au/>
- Myeloma Australia <https://myeloma.org.au/>
- Oncology Social Work Australia and New Zealand <http://oswa.net.au/>
- Government support for businesses – Business.gov.au support line **13 28 46** <https://treasury.gov.au/coronavirus>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR YOUNG CANCER PATIENTS

- Canteen Connect – Online community and counselling for young people impacted by cancer, also on **1800 835 932** <https://canteenconnect.org/>
- Youth Cancer Services – Specialist treatment and support for young cancer patients aged 15-25 <https://www.canteen.org.au/youth-cancer/>
- Regarding Schools & Attendance: Young cancer patients and their families might have additional questions regarding issues such as attending school. Please view the advice from the Australian and <https://anzchog.org/covid-19-guidance-for-children-and-young-people-undergoing-cancer-treatment/>

FOR INFORMATION REGARDING TRAVEL

- Australian Government <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-travellers>
- Smart Traveller <https://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/news-and-updates/coronavirus-covid-19>

BY AUSTRALIAN STATE / TERRITORY

Australian Capital Territory (ACT Health)

Information <https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/>

Northern Territory (NT Dept of Health)

Information <https://coronavirus.nt.gov.au/>

New South Wales (NSW Health)

Information

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/coronavirus.aspx>

For Healthcare Workers

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/coronavirus-professionals.aspx>

Queensland (QLD Health)

For Clinicians <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/clinical-practice/guidelines-procedures/novel-coronavirus-qld-clinicians>

Information

<https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19>

South Australia (SA Health)

Information

<https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/health+topics/health+topics+a+-+z/COVID+2019>

SA Healthcare Workers Information

Resources and Links

<https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/clinical+resources/clinical+topics/infectious+diseases+control/novel+coronavirus+%282019-ncov%29+infection+for+health+professionals/coronavirus+disease+2019+%28covid-19%29+resources+and+links+for+health+professionals>

Victoria (VIC Dept of Health & Human Services)

Health Hub <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/>

Information <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>

For Healthcare Workers <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/health-services-and-general-practitioners-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>

Western Australia (WA Health)

Information https://www2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Coronavirus

GLOBAL World Health Organization (WHO) <https://www.who.int/westernpacific/emergencies/covid-19>