

COVID -19 RESPONSE – CANCER

Your local health and care system is working round the clock in the fight against COVID-19.

At the same time, it is trying wherever possible to maintain vital services for non-COVID-19 patients – in particular, those services relating to the diagnosis and treatment of cancer.

We recognise that suspecting you may have cancer or having recently begun a course of cancer treatment at this most challenging of times is hugely worrying for you and your family.

We would like to reassure you that help and support IS still here.

Please see below a series of answers to questions you may have.

Q. I am worried that I have symptoms of cancer. Should I still go to my GP?

A. Yes. It is important that you contact your GP if you have a worrying possible cancer symptom. Most GP surgeries remain open and are providing telephone consultations.

Q. I have just been referred by my GP with suspected cancer. Should I attend my diagnostic appointment?

A. Unless you hear from the hospital to the contrary, your appointment will still go ahead. There IS disruption to normal services at all hospitals and they will make decisions to prioritise tests for those most in need. If your appointment has to be postponed, the hospital will be in touch.

Q. I am currently undergoing treatment for cancer.

- Will it be postponed?
- Should I still go to hospital appointments?
- How will my hospital decide whether I am a priority for treatment?
- If treatment - including stem cell transplants - are deferred and I begin to relapse, will this limit my eligibility for future lines of treatment?
- Should I start chemotherapy treatment (particularly if it is a 2nd/3rd line for "mop up") or postpone?
- As a Stage 4 patient will I be given life support if I have breathing difficulties due to the virus?
- If I get the virus and recover, will this affect my cancer treatment and outlook?
- Clinicians will always make decisions to prioritise treatment for those most in need and in consultation with patients.

A. The answers to all of these questions will depend on a range of factors unique to your own case. Your clinical team is best placed to talk with you about the effect on your treatment and appointments. They will work with you to determine the best course of action for your individual situation. If you have any concerns or questions about your treatment, please speak to your clinical team.

Q. I am on chemotherapy. If I experience any COVID-19 symptoms such as sweats/ cough/ shivering, should I call NHS 111 or the chemotherapy care line?

A. You should call the chemotherapy care line.

Q. Will the symptoms be different because I have cancer? What should I look out for?

A. The NHS outlines the common symptoms of coronavirus on its website www.gov.uk/coronavirus

Q. Will there be problems accessing my cancer drugs?

A. There are currently no medicine shortages as a result of COVID-19. The country is well prepared to deal with any impacts of the coronavirus and we have stockpiles of generic drugs like paracetamol in the event of any supply issues. The Department of Health and Social Care is working closely with industry, the NHS and others in the supply chain to ensure patients can access the medicines they need and precautions are in place to prevent future shortages.

Q. I am in remission or I am living with a chronic cancer. Do I need to do anything differently?

A. You should be particularly stringent in following Government social distancing measures.

Q. I have had cancer in the past but have been given the all-clear. Am I at increased risk if I contract the virus?

A. Most people make a full recovery after cancer treatment and their immune system either recovers fully or is not affected.

We know that cancer causes anxiety, and we know that that level of anxiety is currently increased due to COVID-19. Please be assured that our specialist teams remain fully focussed on providing the best possible diagnosis, treatment and care.

Further support is provided by all the organisations below.

[Macmillan Hope Programme](#)

[Macmillan: Cancer and Coronavirus](#)

[Cancer Research UK: Cancer and Coronavirus](#)

[Coventry COVID-19 Community Support](#)

[Warwickshire COVID-19 Community Support](#)