

Coronavirus (COVID-19) – information for children, young people and families from the Haematology/Oncology team

We understand that you might be worried about coronavirus – also known as COVID-19 – particularly if your child has been diagnosed with a haematology/oncology condition. This information sheet from the Haematology/Oncology team at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) sets out our advice for children and young people who use our services. Please read this alongside our general information about coronavirus (COVID-19) available online at www.gosh.nhs.uk/news/coronavirus-covid-19-information-children-young-people-and-families

This guidance has been modified by the team at GOSH from the CCLG guidance which can be accessed at the following site www.cclg.org.uk/news/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-children-and-young-people-with-cancer-undergoing-treatment

Does COVID-19 affect children?

The evidence to date shows that although children do develop COVID-19 very few children will develop severe infection with COVID-19.

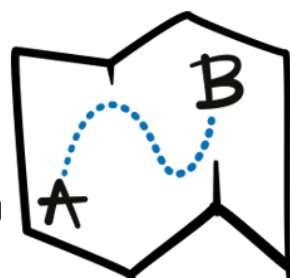
Symptomatic COVID-19 disease is uncommon in children – less than 1 per cent of 72,314 cases in China were under the age of 10 years.

As at 14th March, there have been no positive cases in Lombardy (the most affected region in Italy) of COVID-19 in children with paediatric haematological disease or who have received a bone marrow transplant.

There has only been one reported case of COVID-19 in a child with leukaemia in China. As at 18th March, there have been no positive cases of COVID-19 in children or young people in UK, Italy or France with Aplastic Anaemia.

Children and young people with blood disorders undergoing treatment have a weakened immune system which will make it harder for the body to fight off infections such as COVID-19 (in the same way as for seasonal flu). It is important for children with haematology/oncology conditions and their families to follow shielding precautions to protect themselves where possible.

You should follow the normal guidance for attending hospital if your child develops a fever. Your child will be assessed and treated as per local policy. If you are concerned that your child has symptoms of COVID-19 or has a known COVID-19 contact, it is essential that you inform the treating hospital before your arrival so necessary arrangements can be made.



Specific advice about treatments and procedures from the Haematology/Oncology team

Wherever possible, planned treatment will continue to be delivered as scheduled. Routine scans and procedures such as MRI scans and bone marrow biopsies may need to be postponed.

Decisions will need to be made on case-by-case basis by your specialist teams. Please discuss with your specialist team.

Supportive care and transfusions should carry on as planned. It may be that if the situation worsens significantly, your child's transfusion threshold (the blood result that triggers the need for a transfusion) may need to be altered.

There have been no reported cases of transmission of COVID-19 from transfusions. COVID-19 is a respiratory virus and thus is not transmitted via transfusion. Blood transfusions are safe.

Specific advice about medicines from the Haematology/Oncology team

It is not recommended to stop or change your child's treatment to reduce the risk of acquiring the infection. The infection is mild in the vast majority of children – reducing or omitting treatment routinely is therefore NOT recommended.

For children and young people already receiving treatment within a clinical trial, the plan will be to continue where possible and to reassess the situation frequently. For early Phase I and Phase

II clinical trials, some centres have suspended recruitment until further notice. Decisions will need to be made on case-by-case basis by local teams.

If you have any questions regarding your child's treatment, please ask your child's consultant or a member of the team.

Should we make alternative clinic appointments?

If your child has a scheduled appointment for treatment, unless they are unwell, they should attend.

In the event of any disruption to the service provided, clinicians will always make decisions to prioritise treatment for those most in need and in consultation with patients. The chief focus will be to provide essential services, helping those most at risk to access the right treatment.

Clinicians are looking to remove the need for patients to attend face-to-face appointments wherever possible. This might involve to telephone appointments or exploring video consultations.

If your child has an upcoming clinic appointment, we will be in touch with you to discuss how we can best carry this out remotely.

Currently, outreach visits to the home will be going ahead where possible. Please ensure you communicate with staff prior to any planned home visits to let them know whether any household members are symptomatic and are self-isolating.

Further information and support

Information from the NHS at www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/

Information for children is available on the BBC Newsround website at www.bbc.co.uk/newsround

