

Coronavirus (COVID-19) – information for children, young people and families from the Inflammatory Bowel Disease team

We understand that you might be worried about coronavirus – also known as COVID-19 – particularly if your child has a long-term health condition, such as inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). This information sheet from the Gastroenterology team at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) sets out our advice for children, young people and families who use our services.

Please read this alongside our general FAQs for families at gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19-FAQ. You can also find the latest news, information and resources in our COVID-19 information hub at www.gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19.

This information has been approved by the clinical team at GOSH.

Does COVID-19 affect children?

The evidence to date shows that although children do develop COVID-19, very few children will develop severe symptoms. This includes children with inflammatory bowel disease, whether they are immune-compromised or not.

What is the national advice for children with a chronic illness?

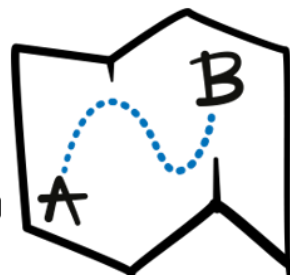
At the start of the pandemic, it was thought that all patients receiving immunosuppressant medication may be at higher risk because of COVID-19. This was a sensible and safe approach based on the evidence at the time. You may have been advised by the NHS and your clinical team at GOSH to ‘shield’ your child.

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) has since updated their guidance specifically for children and young people. Most paediatric patients receiving immunosuppressant medication are no longer considered to be “extremely clinically vulnerable”.

However, there is still a small group of children and young people with IBD that should continue shielding, whether because of the treatment they’re receiving or their specific medical situation.

If your child needs to shield, you will have received a communication from the NHS and/or your clinical team at GOSH.

Find more information about which IBD patients require shielding on the Crohn’s and Colitis UK website at www.crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/decision-tree-children or via the British Society of Paediatric Gastroenterology (BSPGHAN) link below.



We appreciate being asked to shield your child might cause anxiety. You can find special guidance from GOSH on what shielding means for child and family at gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19-and-vulnerable-children. You can find further guidance on shielding at nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/whos-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus.

If your child is not included in these shielding lists, your child should now be able to leave the house with family, so long as they follow the Government's widely published advice to prevent the spread of infection, including following strict social distancing and keeping good hand hygiene.

If you're unsure whether your child should be shielding or have questions or concerns about staying shielded, please contact your clinical team.

My child's treatment or health has changed. Are they at high risk of COVID-19?

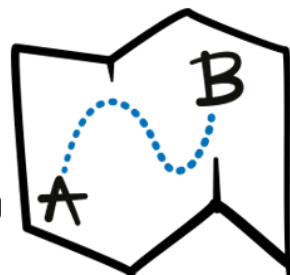
We will contact you directly if anything changes, so that you have the information and support you need to take the necessary precautions to protect your child.

If your child develops any additional medical problems, please seek advice from the other teams involved in their care.

If your child has symptoms of COVID-19, please do not visit your GP or pharmacist – use the NHS 111 online service at 111.nhs.uk for urgent medical advice and then contact the IBD team for further support.

If you are worried about your child or you feel their life is at risk, you should always call 999 or go to your local A&E or urgent care centre as you normally would.

Should my child stop taking their medication as a precaution?



No, it's very important that your child continues to take their medications as prescribed unless your clinical team tells you otherwise.

The current advice from IBD specialists internationally, is that the benefit of staying on medication is greater than the risks associated with stopping it.

Taking your child off their medications can lead to a flare-up of their disease, which can lead to hospitalisation.

Should we make alternative clinic appointments?

Our clinical teams are looking at each patient carefully to work out which clinics and consultations can be done another way such as through video or phone calls, which appointments, procedures and admissions can be rescheduled safely, and which patients absolutely need to come into hospital.

If your child has an upcoming clinic appointment, we will be in touch with you to discuss how we can best carry this out. This may mean your child is offered a telephone appointment or a video consultation.

As we start to re-open our services, we are prioritising children and young people who need our care most urgently. We understand that some families may be worried about visiting GOSH, but if we invite you to visit the hospital, it's because we think it's important that your child is seen.

If you require further advice, please contact us via MyGOSH at mygosh.nhs.uk

Your IBD team is here to support you!

Further information and support

Information from Crohn's and Colitis UK at: www.crohnsandcolitis.org.uk

Information from CIRCA (IBD Charity for Children in the UK) at: www.cicra.org/news/coronavirus/

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

Information about COVID19 in children from the NHS at: what0-18.nhs.uk/popular-topics/coronavirus

BSPGHAN Shielding Advice: <https://bspghan.org.uk/bspghan-updated-shielding-guidance-and-advice-on-returning-to-school-for-children-with-gastrointestinal-liver-and-nutritional-problems>

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

