

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 and young people who use our services.

Please read this alongside our general information about coronavirus (COVID-19) available online at <https://www.gosh.nhs.uk/news/coronavirus-covid-19-information-hub>.

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](https://www.rcpch.co.uk)) 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".

Changes to Government advice around shielding

The government has issued new advice on 5 November 2020 around shielding and the requirements during the second national 'lockdown'. These changes may have caused both confusion and anxiety.

The majority of children with inflammatory bowel disease, irrespective of treatment, are at low risk of complications related to coronavirus. For the majority of our patients who have IBD and who are on immunosuppressant medications, the current recommendation is that they can continue to go to school and do not need to 'shield'.



Furthermore they are still able to attend school even if a family member is shielding.

However there is a group of both adults and children who have been classed as 'extremely clinically vulnerable,' where the government has advised they should shield during this period of national 'lockdown.'

The government has contacted all patients who may have met shielding criteria previously, and has advised them to contact their clinical teams, as to whether they are viewed as 'extremely clinically vulnerable'.

It is important to note, as we have learnt more about COVID-19 that for many children who were shielding previously, this is no longer required.

Is my child 'extremely clinically vulnerable' and should they shield?

The current guidance from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) and the NHS is that children with inflammatory bowel disease who are may consider themselves 'extremely clinically vulnerable' include:

- On oral prednisolone or intravenous methylprednisolone at a dose of 20mg or more (or on more than 1mg per kg of weight e.g. 15kg child on 15mg or more)
- Have started a biological medicine (such as Infliximab, Adalimumab, or Ustekinumab) in the last 6 weeks. If your child has started on vedolizumab in the last 6 weeks, please discuss with your clinical team.
- have required a recent unplanned hospital admission for IBD, please discuss with the clinic team.

For these patients the IBD service is recommending that they should follow precautions for those deemed at higher risk of a COVID-19 infection.

This requires the child to follow 'shielding' advice – further information about this can be found here: www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/advice-for-people-at-high-risk/

We will let you know as the recommendations change.

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.

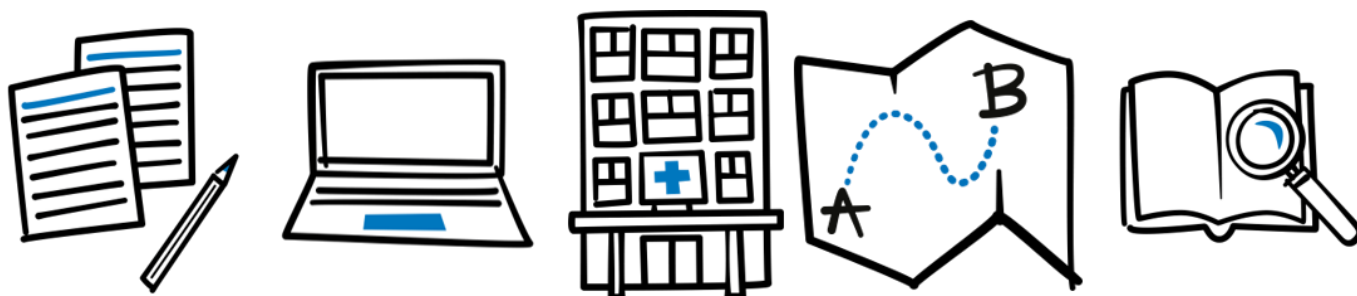
If you are worried about your child or you feel their life is at risk, you should always call 999 or go to your local A&E or urgent care centre as you normally would.

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 are 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/

Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health RCPCH: www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/covid-19-resources-general-public

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

Information for children is available on the following websites:

BBC Newsround website at www.bbc.co.uk/newsround

