

# COVID-19 guidance for children and young people with cancer undergoing treatment and their families

This guidance is intended for children and young people on active cancer treatment and up to six months after completion of treatment and those who have received a bone marrow transplant (BMT), also called a stem cell transplant (SCT).

Children and adolescents with cancer and their families should be aware that the risk and course of COVID-19 are currently not well known. Therefore, the information contained in these guidelines will largely come from information from the Children's Cancer and Leukaemia Group UK, and also from SIOP Europe and the IGHG (International Guideline Harmonization Group).

## Information 1: Extremely vulnerable group

The COVID-19 **extremely vulnerable group** with regard to cancer includes all children and adolescents:

- Undergoing active chemotherapy for any diagnosis
- Receiving treatment for leukaemia or lymphoma
- Who have received a donor stem cell transplant in the last 24 months
- Who have received their own stem cells back in the last 12 months
- Receiving immunotherapy including CAR-T patients
- Receiving other antibody treatments for cancer
- Receiving targeted cancer treatments (these usually end with -nib, for example dasatinib, crizotinib)



### **How might coronavirus affect my child who is undergoing cancer treatment?**

Children and young people undergoing cancer treatment have a weakened immune system which will make it harder for the body to fight off infections such as COVID-19. It is important for children with cancer and their families to follow steps to protect themselves where possible.



### **How might coronavirus affect my child who is due to have a bone marrow or stem cell transplant?**

Children and young people who are due to receive bone marrow transplant should discuss details with their transplant team.



### **What should I do if my child is in the extremely vulnerable group?**

Shielding is a practice used to protect extremely vulnerable people from coming into contact with coronavirus. We understand that these measures are very challenging for families with children to follow. We

also recognise the difficulties faced by families where children may be cared for in more than one household or where carers may also be key workers.

- Strictly avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough.
- Do not leave your house apart from essential medical visits to the hospital for treatment as advised by your own team
- Home visits from nurses who provide essential support should continue as advised by your own team
- Do not attend any gatherings. This includes gatherings of friends and families in private spaces for example family homes, weddings and religious services.
- Do not go out for shopping, leisure or travel and, when arranging food or medication deliveries, these should be left at the door to minimise contact.
- Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media.

Other important measures:

- Wash hands regularly (with soap and water, at least 20 seconds)
- Remind people in your household to wash their hands regularly, do not touch their faces and clean frequently used surfaces particularly thoroughly

We advise that ALL people in the household adhere to these measures.

## Information 2: Vulnerable Group

The COVID-19 **vulnerable group** with regard to cancer includes all children and adolescents:

- Up to 6 months after completion of standard chemotherapy
- Who have received radiotherapy to the whole abdomen or to the spleen
- Who are on long term maintenance steroids
- Who have completed treatment for cancer but have ongoing chronic lung, heart, kidney or neurological conditions



### What should I do if my child is in the vulnerable group?

Please continue to follow the federal government's measures. Stay at home and avoid contact with others. This also applies to siblings and other people living in the household.

## Information 3: For all children and adolescents with cancer



### What if my child does not fall into either extremely vulnerable or vulnerable group?

Most children who completed standard chemotherapy more than 6 months ago should follow the rules recommended for everyone, to stay at home and stay away from others. We suggest you check with your treating team if you have specific questions about your child.



## **What should I do if my child develops a fever?**

You should follow the normal guidance for attending hospital if your child develops a fever. Your child will be assessed and treated as per your local hospital 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.



## **Will my child have a cubicle if they need to stay in hospital?**

Sufficient capacities are currently available.



## **What if someone in our household develops symptoms?**

Staying at home for 14 days will greatly reduce the overall amount of infection the household could pass on to others in the community. Self-isolation does not apply to children undergoing treatment for cancer who will need to be assessed in hospital first if they develop symptoms.



## **Should my child continue taking oral chemotherapy?**

It is not recommended to stop or change your child's chemotherapy to reduce the risk of neutropenia or for any other reason during the pandemic. If you have any questions regarding your child's treatment, please ask your child's consultant or a member of the team.



## **What about visiting my child in hospital?**

Visits in Austria are regulated differently from clinic to clinic. Please ask your treating team.



## **Should we cancel my child's treatment or follow-up appointments at the hospital?**

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.

Centres will be encouraged to offer telephone or Skype consultations for those patients who do not necessarily need to travel to the hospital for treatment. Please ask directly in your treating clinic.