



# COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and Cancer: Information if you are a patient or carer

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This leaflet is for those who have a diagnosis of cancer, or those who care for someone with cancer.

**If you are on treatment for cancer, it is very important to phone for advice if you become unwell.**



Any cancer patient worried about symptoms should call their existing **cancer treatment helpline or the national Cancer Treatment Helpline on 0800 917 7711.**

The 111 telephone service provides urgent care services day or night. If you have a non-life threatening condition for which you would previously have visited A&E, you should call NHS 24 on 111. 111 can also help you get the right care if your GP or dental practice is closed and you cannot wait until they reopen.

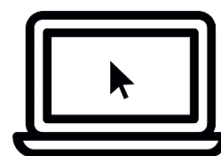
You can also get extra advice and general support from:

Cancer Research UK: 0808 800 4040 (Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm)

Macmillan Cancer Support: 0808 808 00 00 (every day, 9am - 5pm)

The NHS Inform Scotland website:

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus>



Coronavirus Helpline: 0800 028 2816 (every day, 8am- 8pm) – for any questions about coronavirus that aren't answered online.

National Assistance Helpline: 0800 111 4000 (Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm) – for anyone who must isolate and cannot get help or support from family or friends.

There are many cancer charities in Scotland also offering support – please see the end of this leaflet for contact details.





## Should I still attend hospital for cancer appointments?

You should keep any appointments you have. Where possible, some appointments may be changed to telephone or video calls. This will reduce the amount of contact you have with others and keep you as safe as possible.

Where possible you should attend hospital and GP appointments on your own. In some circumstances you can bring someone else with you. These circumstances include if you:

- find it difficult to understand what treatment or action your doctor is discussing
- have dementia, a learning disability or autism
- are potentially receiving life-changing information
- are potentially receiving a cancer diagnosis
- are discussing cancer treatment options
- are distressed or stressed

There may be some occasions when you can have more than one other person with you at a hospital or GP appointment. For example, a translator and someone who gives you mobility support.

You may be able to have someone with you virtually during your appointment if they can't attend in person. This could be through a phone or video call.

## What does this mean for my cancer treatment?

**We know that COVID-19 is a very significant risk in relation to cancer treatment and our absolute priority is your safety.**

Since the impact of COVID-19, cancer specialists across the country have been working together to plan different ways of delivering safe treatment. The current treatments are being delivered as safely and as effective as possible.

Changes in management of physical spaces to minimise the risks of COVID-19 and staff absences mean some reduction in capacity to deliver cancer treatments. Cancer remains a priority in the NHS and your clinical team should keep you updated on your next appointment.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also led to a reduction in capacity and caused delays to cancer surgery. We have been working to reduce delays as much as possible by starting anticancer treatments before surgery for some cancers.





## What should I do if I become unwell while on treatment for cancer?

**If you become ill while receiving treatment for cancer, it is very important to phone for advice.**

**Remember:** You can feel unwell for reasons other than COVID-19. Any cancer patient who starts to feel unwell should call their existing **cancer treatment helpline or the national Cancer Treatment Helpline 0800 917 7711**. They will ask you questions and will give advice, or arrange for you to go to your nearest hospital.

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are a new continuous cough, a fever/high temperature (37.8°C or greater), and/or loss of, or change in taste or smell.

A new continuous cough is where you:

- have a new cough that's lasted for an hour
- have had 3 or more episodes of coughing in 24 hours
- are coughing more than usual

A high temperature is feeling hot to the touch on your chest or back (you don't need to measure your temperature). You may feel warm, cold or shivery. Some people will have more serious symptoms, including pneumonia or difficulty breathing, which might require admission to hospital.

**If you have chest pain, significant bleeding or need immediate medical attention call 999.**

## I am currently being treated for cancer, is there something I can do differently to reduce the risk of COVID-19?

You should take protective measures to reduce the risk of picking up any infections and stop coronavirus (COVID-19) spreading.

### DO:

- wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser if soap and water is not available
- wear a face covering if you use public transport, use school transport (children aged 5 and over), visit a care home or hospital, or go to a shop, library, museum, bank or church
- work from home if you can – your employer should support you to do this
- use phone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services
- meet others outdoors whenever possible and try to keep your distance
- keep rooms well ventilated when meeting other households indoors, if possible consider opening windows or a door

### DON'T:

- meet anyone with coronavirus symptoms (new continuous cough, fever or loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste)
- touch your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands





## Should I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

It is recommended that everyone with cancer, including all those receiving anti-cancer therapy (which includes cytotoxics, immunotherapy and targeted therapies), radiotherapy or steroids, considers getting the coronavirus vaccine.

The UK's expert advisory group on vaccines, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) consider the Pfizer/BioNTech, Oxford/AstraZeneca and Moderna coronavirus vaccines to be safe for people with suppressed immune systems.

Immunosuppression may however reduce the effectiveness of vaccines. You should not assume you are immune after receiving the vaccine, and strictly adhere to measures to reduce your exposure to the virus. This same advice is given to everyone receiving the vaccine.

If you're about to receive treatment that will suppress your immune system, your doctor may advise you to get the vaccine before starting therapy (ideally at least two weeks before), when your immune system is able to respond better.

Where possible, it's preferable for your vaccine doses to be given before starting treatment. To provide maximum benefit, it's recommended that your second dose is given either 3 or 4 weeks after the first dose. But this will depend on the vaccine given. If you're eligible for a third primary dose, your specialist doctor will advise on the timing.

For more information about the vaccine, including information about booking an appointment go to: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/covid-19-vaccine/> or call 0800 0308013.

## How can I maintain a positive mental health?

We understand that the situation you may be facing at the moment due to COVID-19 and your health condition can cause worry, fear and anxiety.

NHS Inform has lots of hints and tips to help you to look after your mental health. It covers everything from sleep to exercise, eating well, developing a routine and connecting with others. NHS Inform can also point you towards a number of services that can help, and the NHS 24 Mental Health Hub is also available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, on 111. Go to <https://www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus> for more information.

The cancer charities listed at the end of this leaflet also provide a range of information and support services which can help you to maintain good mental health whilst living with uncertainty.





## How can I share my experience of what went well and what could be better?

Care Opinion is a place where you can share your experience of health or care services, and help make them better for everyone. You can share your own story on Care Opinion. Say what was good and what could have been better. It is completely anonymous but what you share will be visible to the services involved and the wider public. Staff from the service will often provide a response to your comments.

To find out more and/or share your story go to <https://www.careopinion.org.uk/> or call them on 0800 122 3135.





## Sources of Support: Scottish Cancer Coalition

Organisation	Website address	Telephone number	Telephone helpline	Digital enquiries, email service, Ask a nurse	Access to specialist staff	Counseling/ Psychology	Support/Peer Network Groups	Workshops/Course	Complementary Therapies	Benefits/Financial Advice	Additional Services
Anthony Nolan	<a href="http://www.anthonynolan.org">www.anthonynolan.org</a>	030 330 30303	*	*	*	*					
Ayrshire Cancer Support	<a href="http://www.ayrshirecs.org">www.ayrshirecs.org</a>	01563 538 008	*	*		*	*	*	*		Transport
Beatson Cancer Charity	<a href="http://www.beatsoncancercharity.org">www.beatsoncancercharity.org</a>	0141 212 0505			*	*	*	*	*		Specialist Health & Work, Befriending
Blood Cancer UK	<a href="http://www.bloodcancer.org.uk">www.bloodcancer.org.uk</a>	0808 169 5155	*	*			*	*			
Bowel Cancer UK	<a href="http://www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk">www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk</a>	020 7940 1760		*			*	*			
Brain Tumour Research	<a href="http://www.braintumourresearch.org">www.braintumourresearch.org</a>	0190 886 7200									
Breast Cancer Now	<a href="http://www.breastcancernow.org">www.breastcancernow.org</a>	0808 800 6000	*								
Cancer Research UK	<a href="http://www.cancerresearchuk.org">www.cancerresearchuk.org</a>	0300 123 1022	*	*							Cancer chat online forum
Cancer Support Scotland	<a href="http://www.cancersupportscotland.org">www.cancersupportscotland.org</a>	0800 652 4531		*		*	*	*	*		Podiatry and Befriending
Clan Cancer Support	<a href="http://www.clancancersupport.org">www.clancancersupport.org</a>	0122 464 7000	*	*		*	*	*	*		B&B, Transport, Hair
Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust	<a href="http://www.jostrust.org.uk">www.jostrust.org.uk</a>	0808 802 8000	*								
Kidney Cancer Scotland	<a href="http://www.kcuk.org.uk/scotland">www.kcuk.org.uk/scotland</a>	0141 428 3494	*	*		*	*			*	





Organisation	Website address	Telephone number	Telephone helpline	Digital Enquiries, email service, Ask a nurse	Access to specialist staff	Counselling/ Psychology	Support/Peer Network Groups	Workshops/Course	Complementary Therapies	Benefits/Financial Advice	Other
Leukaemia Care	<a href="http://www.leukaemiicare.org.uk">www.leukaemiicare.org.uk</a>	0808 801 0444	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
Macmillan Cancer Support	<a href="http://www.macmillan.org.uk">www.macmillan.org.uk</a>	0808 808 0000	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	Telephone buddies
Maggie's	<a href="http://www.maggies.org">www.maggies.org</a>	0300 123 1801		*	*	*	*	*		*	
MASScot: Melanoma Action and Support Scotland	<a href="http://www.masscot.org.uk">www.masscot.org.uk</a>	0773 823 1260	*	*					*		Prevention Education
Myeloma UK	<a href="http://www.myeloma.org.uk">www.myeloma.org.uk</a>	0800 980 3332	*	*			*				
OCHRE: the oesophageal cancer charity	<a href="http://www.ochrecharity.org.uk">www.ochrecharity.org.uk</a>	0800 822 3370		*							
Pancreatic Cancer UK	<a href="http://www.pancreaticcancer.org.uk">www.pancreaticcancer.org.uk</a>	0808 801 0707	*	*	*		*	*			
Pancreatic Cancer Action Scotland	<a href="http://www.pancreaticcanceraction.org">www.pancreaticcanceraction.org</a>	030 304 01770									
Prostate Cancer UK	<a href="http://www.prostatecanceruk.org">www.prostatecanceruk.org</a>	020 331 07000	*	*	*	*	*	*			
Prostate Scotland	<a href="http://www.prostatescotland.org.uk">www.prostatescotland.org.uk</a>	0131 603 8660		*				*			1-2-1 support
Roy Castle Lung Cancer	<a href="http://www.roycastle.org">www.roycastle.org</a>	033 3323 7200	*								
Target Ovarian Cancer	<a href="http://www.targetovariancancer.org.uk">www.targetovariancancer.org.uk</a>	020 7923 5475	*								
Teenage Cancer Trust	<a href="http://www.teenagecancertrust.org">www.teenagecancertrust.org</a>	020 761 20370			*		*	*			Activities for Young People
The Brain Tumour Charity	<a href="http://www.thebraintumourcharity.org">www.thebraintumourcharity.org</a>	0808 800 0004	*	*			*			*	
Young Lives Vs Cancer	<a href="http://www.younglivesvscancer.org.uk">www.younglivesvscancer.org.uk</a>	030 0330 0803	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	

