**Coronavirus: advice for adult patients with Sickle Cell**

Please be advised that this patient information may become rapidly out of date, so please check the NHS website for up to date information.

* Wash your hands often - with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
* Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available. This is particularly important after taking public transport.
* Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
* Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
* If you feel unwell, stay at home, do not attend work or school.
* Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in a bin. See [Catch it, Bin it, Kill it](https://www.england.nhs.uk/south/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2017/09/catch-bin-kill.pdf)
* Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in the home and work environment.
* If you are worried about your symptoms, please call NHS 111. Do not go directly to your GP or other healthcare environment.
* see [further information](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-guidance-to-assist-professionals-in-advising-the-general-public/www.gov.uk/guidance/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-information-for-the-public) and the [Public Health England Blog](https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2020/01/23/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-what-you-need-to-know/)
* see advice on the Sickle Cell Society website

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19 acute respiratory disease. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus.

* Avoid large gatherings.
* Avoid handshakes and hugs.
* Avoid contact with people who have recently travelled in parts of the world where coronavirus rates are high: China, Korea, Italy, Iran (this list will be updated depending on evolution of the epidemic).
* Stay warm.
* Make sure you have had the flu vaccine.
* Continue with Penicillin Prophylaxis.
* Drink plenty of fluids.
* In case of raised temperature (38C and above) or a new cough please contact your GP or 111 for advice. Explain that you have sickle cell disease and if you have had a splenectomy, please let them know. You may be asked to stay at home and self-isolate. In the interim, double your dose of penicillin V (500mg) and take 4 times a day.
* If you have an incentive spirometer at home, then please use this.
* Please also contact our sickle cell and thalassaemia service to inform the team of advice given, by emailing bhnt.scatservice-rlh@nhs.net or calling 02035941897 and leaving a message. We will endeavour to contact you within 24 hours to advise further management.
* If in addition to the above symptoms you have breathlessness or you have severe chest pain that stops you from taking a deep breath then you should attend for assessment (go to the emergency department). If you have any other severe symptoms we recommend you attend the emergency department for review.
* Make sure you have enough stock of medication at home like pain killers and antibiotics. Please make sure you have a reliable thermometer.
* Follow all the general advice from the government and check for regular updates on the PHE (Public Health England) website.
* We may need to make changes to the scheduling of regular transfusions.
* We may need to make changes to your out-patient appointments including the option of telephone consultations.
* We may delay non-essential or routine investigations.

**Frequently asked questions**

**Am I at increased risk of catching Covid-19?**

No, your risk of catching Covid-19 is the same as everyone else in the population.

**Would I get a more severe version because of my “underlying health condition”?**

Looking at what is happening in other countries and having spoken to doctors in Italy where they also have sickle cell disease and Covid-19, there does not appear to be a higher risk of severe disease but we don’t really know. However, the worry with sickle cell disease is that we miss other respiratory complications including acute chest syndrome or severe bacterial pneumonia (lung infection).

**Are there risks from the blood transfusion itself?**

Due to precautions being taken, we anticipate no additional risk of either being unable to find safely matched blood for blood transfusions, nor any additional risk of contracting Covid-19 from the blood itself.

**Should I stop my hydroxycarbamide because of the increased risk of infection?**

**Do not stop your hydroxycarbamide**, as it is protecting you from crises and having to come in to hospital. We anticipate that many hospital patients will have Covid-19 infection, and therefore we would want to avoid patients with sickle cell disease coming in to hospital with a crisis and contracting Covid-19 as an inpatient. Hydroxycarbamide does not increase the risk of viral infections. We will continue monitoring blood tests at 3 monthly intervals.

We may make changes to where you have your blood test and will let you know if this is the case.

At present please continue to collect your prescription as normal.